United Nations A/53/PV.20

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 29 September 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 16

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/389)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): By its decision 45/319 of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, elected Mrs. Sadako Ogata as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1991.

By its decision 48/307 of 4 November 1993, the Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, extended the term of office of Mrs. Ogata as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period of five years, beginning on 1 January 1994 and ending on 31 December 1998.

By its resolution 52/104 of 12 December 1997, the General Assembly decided to continue the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for a further period of five years from 1 January 1999.

In view of her distinguished contribution to the United Nations and her preference, for personal reasons, not to serve another full term, the Secretary-General proposes to the General Assembly that the term of office of Mrs. Sadako Ogata as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees be extended for a period of two years, beginning on 1 January 1999 and ending on 31 December 2000.

May I consider that the General Assembly approves the proposal contained in document A/53/389?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Assembly, I should like to congratulate Mrs. Sadako Ogata of Japan on the extension of her appointment as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period of two years, beginning on 1 January 1999 and ending on 31 December 2000.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): On behalf of the delegation of Japan, I should like to welcome the decision just adopted by the General Assembly to extend the term of office of Mrs. Sadako Ogata as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for two years, through the end of December 2000.

I should like to take this opportunity to express the high appreciation of the Government of Japan to the High Commission for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, for her leadership in the remarkable contribution that the Office

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of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been making in the assistance and protection of refugees all over the world and in the search for a durable solution to the refugee issue.

Mrs. Ogata has been the High Commissioner for Refugees since 1991. This has been an extraordinary period for UNHCR, with an unprecedented proliferation of regional and internal conflicts that have brought about a massive exodus of refugees and displaced persons from the areas of such conflicts. In this situation, the international community has had to take much more proactive and innovative approaches to meet the challenges posed by this new development. The success of humanitarian operations, particularly those carried out by UNHCR, in order to save the lives of tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons, has become a matter of critical importance as a prerequisite for peace and stability. UNHCR, under the remarkable leadership of the High Commissioner, has met this enormous challenge with great dedication and with considerable success.

As UNHCR is expected to play a central role in humanitarian operations in this new situation, the challenges it faces are many. The Office of the High Commissioner has to redouble its efforts in order to meet these new challenges. Among them is the problem of how to ensure the safety of personnel engaged in humanitarian operations. It is also important to develop a comprehensive approach to enhance the sustainability of plans to effect the repatriation of refugees.

Another fundamental issue that we face in the United Nations system is how to link the stage of humanitarian rescue operations for refugees — which is within the proper domain of the mandate of the UNHCR — on the one hand, and the stage of post-conflict rehabilitation, which will include a phase of reintegrating returnees into society, on the other hand. Cooperation between UNHCR and other organs of the United Nations, as well as development agencies, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, is crucial in achieving satisfactory results in this regard.

At this critical moment in the evolution of UNHCR, the commitment, wisdom and experience of Mrs. Sadako Ogata are indispensable. Japan is indeed gratified that Mrs. Ogata will continue to be available for two years to exercise leadership at this critical juncture.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): As this is the first time I have spoken at this session of the General Assembly, let me first of all reiterate the congratulations addressed to you, Mr. President, by the Austrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Schüssel, on your assumption of your high office.

On behalf of the European Union, it is my pleasure to congratulate Mrs. Sadako Ogata on the more than well-deserved extension of her appointment as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The European Union warmly welcomes her readiness to serve in this high office for another two years.

Since 1991, Mrs. Ogata has discharged her mission as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with diligence and dedication. She has won justified praise for her relentless efforts to alleviate the plight of millions of refugees, internally displaced persons or victims of war so that they can survive emergency situations, find safety and eventually return home.

The European Union will continue to fully support Mrs. Ogata in the fulfilment of her noble task. We thank her for her readiness to continue to serve the international community and refugees throughout the world.

Ms. King (United States of America): We heartily congratulate Mrs. Ogata on her re-election as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As Mrs. Ogata always eloquently highlights, the erosion of commitment to the respect for humanitarian principles and the breaches of refugee protection have distressed us all. Protection is at the heart of the international community's responsibility towards refugees. It is the core of the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, UNHCR cannot provide protection alone. Governments must be responsible for protecting refugees on their territory, for ensuring their safety and for their non-refoulement to countries or territories where their lives or freedom will be threatened.

The United States condemns the continued killing and kidnapping of humanitarian personnel. Our hearts go out to the families and friends of the many — too many — humanitarian workers who have been targeted by violence in recent years. These brutal acts are unacceptable and are again evidence of the disregard for basic humanitarian principles in many parts of the world. We are pleased, though, that the Security Council is conducting an open debate this morning to begin to find solutions to the vexing problem of the security of humanitarian workers and refugees.

Another key element is the necessity to ensure and protect the civilian character of refugee camps. Camps must be located away from borders, and military elements must be disarmed and separated from the general refugee population. The United States is deeply engaged in the work to establish an international mechanism to assist host Governments in maintaining the security and neutrality of refugee camps.

The United States remains concerned about the vulnerability of refugee women and refugee children. It is essential to keep women and children at the centre of protection and assistance policies and programming. While progress has been made, we would like to see the special protection and assistance needs of refugee women and refugee children mainstreamed into every policy and programme of the Organization and carried out in the field by every representative, protection officer and programme officer.

Finally, despite all the difficulties and setbacks, I would like to express my Government's appreciation to the High Commissioner and her staff for their constant attention to the fundamental principles of refugee protection — principles we must all strive to implement and to safeguard.

Mr. Dausa Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, which my country is honoured to coordinate during the month of September, recognizes Mrs. Sadako Ogata's distinguished contribution at the head of United Nations refugee activities during the last eight years. Our region is aware of the complexity of the tasks involved in the protection of refugees and in finding lasting solutions to refugee crises. We therefore appreciate highly the work being done around the world by the High Commissioner for Refugees.

The States of Latin America and the Caribbean urge the international community to continue to work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the basis of firm adherence to the guiding principles established in its statute and in subsequent resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States would like to take this very significant opportunity to reaffirm its support for Mrs. Ogata as she continues her mandate as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We wish her every success in her work.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): On behalf of the members of the Group of Asian States, permit me to congratulate Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on the extension of her appointment for a further two-year period. It is broadly recognized that under her skilful guidance and dedication, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has contributed enormously to the protection of the interests of the world's refugees and other displaced persons and — as Secretary-General Kofi Annan has underlined — has alleviated the plight of millions of refugees and other displaced persons and has allowed them to exercise their basic rights to live safely, peacefully and without fear in their own homes.

Because of her rich experience — including seven years as the head of UNHCR — her dedication and her past performance, we have no doubt that Mrs. Ogata will make further efforts to alleviate the plight of the needy, as she has done in the past. We wish her success in this task and pledge our full cooperation.

In conclusion, permit me once again to extend to her our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): On behalf of the delegations of New Zealand and Canada and my own delegation, Australia's, I wish to welcome warmly the re-election of Mrs. Sadako Ogata as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Mrs. Ogata has demonstrated outstanding vision and leadership in guiding the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide important assistance and protection to millions worldwide, and also to bring home to those forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere.

Our delegations wish to congratulate Mrs. Ogata on her work, and we pledge our continued support for the High Commissioner's efforts.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): I am pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to extend, on behalf of the African Group, our warm congratulations to Mrs. Sadako Ogata on the extension of her mandate as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As the Assembly knows, Africa has been and continues to be a continent with a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Under her mandate over the past two years, Mrs. Ogata played a tremendous role in contributing to the alleviation of the suffering of refugees and in searching for a permanent solution to their plight.

The international community as a whole has always paid tribute to the important role of her Office in dealing with current humanitarian issues. I add Africa's voice to the expression of that appreciation.

Under her able leadership, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner has provided protection and humanitarian assistance to people who have been forced to move internally or across international borders. It is our hope that by renewing Mrs. Ogata's mandate, we in the United Nations are committing ourselves to strongly supporting the work of her Office and to uniting our efforts in the search for a permanent solution to the refugee problem. We would like to commend her efforts to encourage the actions that led to the recent humanitarian victory in the Great Lakes region, when many Rwandan refugees returned home, thereby relieving the international community of that burden.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): I should like, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, to congratulate Mrs. Sadako Ogata on her re-election as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Our regional group wishes to commend Mrs. Ogata for her dedication and commitment to defending and promoting the fundamental rights of refugees, as well as for the courage and devotion with which she has pursued her important humanitarian mandate. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the members of her staff; they deserve our full appreciation and support for their noble efforts, often performed under very difficult and hostile conditions, to help thousands of innocent victims deprived of their homes and countries.

The actions of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) demonstrate that humanitarian principles can be implemented only in cooperation with affected States. Our group welcomes the continued efforts of the High Commissioner to find, together with other international Organizations, solutions to the problems of refugees.

In conclusion, I would like to express once more our appreciation to Mrs. Ogata for her achievements during past years, for her personal dedication and for her outstanding leadership of one of the most effective United Nations agencies.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: This concludes our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 16.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Water Resources of Nepal, Her Excellency The Honourable Shailaja Acharya.

Ms. Acharya (Nepal): I wish to recall the late B.P. Koirala, the legendary leader who became the symbol of democracy in Nepal because of his long years of imprisonment, self-sacrifice and struggle. As the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal, he stood at this podium 38 years ago to this very day and declared that the foreign policy of Nepal would be inspired by the purposes and principles of the United Nations. He said that Nepal looked upon the United Nations as an instrument for promoting peace and justice among nations. Those sentiments have always guided Nepal's international relations.

It is my pleasure to extend to you, Sir, the warm congratulations of my delegation on your election as President of the General Assembly. It is a tribute to your great country's contribution to the work of the United Nations and a recognition of your own personal qualifications. Please be assured of the cooperation of my delegation in your work. I would also like to place on record our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, for the wisdom and deftness of touch with which he guided the previous session.

I would also like to express, on behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal, our deep sympathy and condolences to the Governments and the peoples of Bangladesh and China on the massive loss of life and property due to the recent devastating floods in those two friendly neighbouring countries. We also sympathize with the victims of hurricane Georges.

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is heartening to note that this year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While we are guided by lofty human rights goals in the international field, we are no less committed to attaining them at the national level. Our commitment to democracy, human rights and uplifting the quality of life of the people is unflinching, despite a low level of economic development and the

innumerable constraints, including the problem of refugees. It is our firm belief that democracy and development should reinforce each other. Society can enjoy uninterrupted peace and progress only when the rule of law and the participation of an entire people in governance and development are ensured.

We are a small nation with a great heritage. Our tradition has been one of peace, compassion and brotherhood. We have always striven to promote understanding and goodwill among different nations, especially with our neighbours. While retaining our age-old cultural values, our people have struggled for years and have made great sacrifices to establish democratic institutions and to uphold the principles of human rights and dignity. In this endeavour we are conscious of the challenges that we have to face. But we are determined to make all possible efforts to fulfil the aspirations of our people and, in our limited way, to contribute to the achievement of the noble ideals of this great Organization, which provides us with a forum to express our views on the concerns of mankind.

I consider it a privilege and an opportunity to make an appeal to the developed nations to extend support and cooperation in our endeavour to preserve the dignity and honour of our people and the sovereignty of our nation. We are determined to face every eventuality to defend those ideals.

Centralized planning has failed to produce desired results even after many years. We believe that unless people are mobilized, from the grass roots to the policy level, the reality on the ground is unlikely to change. To realize this, institutional and legal changes are necessary. Administrative, financial and political systems have all to be decentralized. Real power has to be transferred to the people. We have taken certain steps in that direction. However, I admit that this is not enough.

We are committed to the empowerment of women. But changing gender hierarchies without changing social and economic hierarchies is not possible, as gender relations do not operate in a vacuum. It is a fact that gender relations are related to and influenced by social, economic and political systems. Nevertheless, as a prelude to the political empowerment of Nepali women, 20 per cent of the seats in local bodies have been reserved. As a result, 36,000 women are now in the political hierarchy at the grass-roots level. In my opinion, this is a significant breakthrough.

The list of problems facing us is endless. We live today in an unequal world, where global disparities in wealth and income are rising rapidly, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, increasingly dividing human societies into one of plenty, luxury and power, on the one hand, and one of poverty and hardship, on the other. The low level of economic development due to the lack of capital and technology, among other things, is hampering the progress and prosperity of developing countries. Similarly, the falling prices of primary commodities, the lack of access to international markets and the low level of resource flows and the unfavourable international economic environment have compounded the difficulties of the developing countries. The worldwide wave of liberalism in trade and services in the aftermath of World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements has moved the international economy to greater competitiveness. However, the capacity of the developing countries to trade needs to be sufficiently enhanced to ensure a level playing field.

The current financial and economic crisis facing many countries is affecting even the advanced economies of the world, not to mention the vulnerable and weaker ones. This calls for much-needed reforms in the global financial system.

The developing world consists of 85 per cent of humanity, more than one third of them in the least developed countries. One third of the countries in this most vulnerable category are landlocked, and this structural deficiency is the greatest handicap to fair competition and development. All these countries have a vital stake in peace and development. In the shaping of a new global dispensation, each category of nations should have a voice and should receive fair and equal treatment.

Sustainable development is not only an economic or ecological phenomenon; it also involves participatory governance, empowerment of women and promotion of equity and justice. In a developing country such as Nepal, the role and participation of women in the development process are of great significance because of the multiple responsibilities of women. In this context, the role of the United Nations system in enhancing the participation of women in national development and in creating awareness of the issues relating to women is laudable.

On our march towards a democratic and just society, we face many challenges, such as pervasive poverty, mass illiteracy, environmental degradation,

population explosion and, above all, gender inequality. We believe that many problems related to economic development can be more effectively tackled through regional and subregional cooperation among nations. Tremendous opportunities are available for subregional cooperation in our part of the world among the countries in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin. These opportunities include water resources development, flood control, energy supply, forestry management and environmental protection, among other things. Development efforts in water resources, for example, would help irrigate the fertile fields in the plains of India, improve the waterways so vital for the transportation sector of Bangladesh and generate hydropower in Nepal to meet the energy needs of the region as a whole. Such a development strategy may be the key to the future prosperity of the region.

Nearly a quarter of the world's population continues to live in extreme poverty. This is largely because our approach to development, in which the State plays an overwhelming role, has given rise to inefficiency and corruption, and our reliance on unregulated market forces has led to an increase in inequality across the world. We believe there is a need for a third alternative in which the human being is at the centre, not the State or market forces; the human being with faith, values, emotions; the human being with dreams and aspirations as a citizen, as a member of family and as an economic being. This approach takes into account all the dimensions of the human being and society. Changing economic relationships and structure alone is not enough. The individual also has to change. We believe that this is what we should be pursuing in the twenty-first century.

I bring the greetings and good wishes of the Government and the people of Nepal to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. In a comparatively short period of time, he has proved his dedication to the task of modernizing our Organization and his great diplomatic talent and statesmanship in defusing situations posing a real threat to international peace and security. In the process of reform which he has started with his far-reaching package of proposals, he can count on Nepal's support.

Reform by its very nature is a continuing process. The United Nations and its principal organs, such as the Security Council, must adapt to the dynamics of change. However, we, the Member States, have so far failed to arrive at a general agreement to improve the composition and functioning of the Security Council to better reflect the reality of a vastly expanded membership of the Organization. The recently concluded summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in South Africa reaffirmed the collective position of non-aligned countries in this regard.

No scheme of reform, however, should undermine the power and authority of the General Assembly, which is the nearest thing to a world parliament. All the leaders of Nepal who have addressed the Assembly have underscored the role and authority of this most democratic and representative organ where each of us has a voice and vote equal to that of a great Power, on any questions or any matters within the scope of the Charter of the Organization.

Sound and secure financing is the basis for good management of the Organization. We believe that all Member States must fulfil their obligations to make full and timely payment of their dues.

In its primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security, peacekeeping has been and will remain one of the indispensable tools of the United Nations. As a troop-contributing country, we are happy to commemorate 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping. Over these years, Nepal has contributed more than 32,000 troops and military and civilian police monitors to various peacekeeping missions of the United Nations around the globe. Many of them have lost lives or limbs in the cause of peace. Nepal has signed a stand-by system agreement with the United Nations. We are committed to deploying up to 2,000 troops, including medical and engineering units, military observers and headquarters staff, and 200 police monitors available to be called at any time by the United Nations, even on short notice.

The recent nuclear tests in South Asia, which came as a disturbing development, have nevertheless reinforced our commitment to speeding up the time-bound nuclear disarmament process. We welcome the declarations made by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan in this Hall last week to facilitate the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

My delegation is happy to note that the Secretary-General has recognized that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, known as the Kathmandu Centre, has provided a valuable forum for meetings on regional confidence and security-building measures. As host to the Centre, Nepal

would urge Member States of the Asia-Pacific region to increasingly avail themselves of the services of the Centre.

Problems related to drug abuse and terrorism defy territorial barriers. As the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, stated at the Durban summit at the beginning of this month, they add to the intricacies of complex regional and global relations. The terrorist bombings in Kenya and Tanzania deserve universal condemnation. These bombings and the subsequent missile strikes came as a shock, reinforcing our belief that concerted international efforts are essential in this regard.

Let me conclude by briefly mentioning the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), consisting of seven countries of the region representing one fifth of humanity. We are united in a common effort to improve the quality of life of all our peoples. The recent Colombo summit agreed to draw up a SAARC social charter to give further dimension to regional cooperation. The seven SAARC countries also finalized a text of a regional convention on combatting the crime of trafficking in women and children for prostitution. The convention will be signed in Kathmandu at the next SAARC summit. This will be another landmark in regional cooperation in South Asia.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Samoa, His Excellency Mr. Tuiloma Neroni Slade.

Mr. Slade (Samoa): May I congratulate Mr. Opertti most warmly on his well-acclaimed election and express to him, on behalf of my Government, our full confidence and support for his presidency.

We want also to pay tribute to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine for his commitment and determined leadership during the fifty-second session.

At this stage of my statement, I am honoured to speak as Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and to do so on behalf of 32 AOSIS States that are Members of the United Nations.

I take the opportunity from the outset to declare our heartfelt concerns and deepest feelings for the people and communities of the Caribbean and those bordering the Caribbean and in the southern parts of the United States who have lost families and properties or have been left homeless by hurricane Georges. We join in the call for the most generous assistance to them all. Several of the countries suffering severe damage and devastation — such as Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Saint Kitts and Nevis and the Virgin Islands — are AOSIS members, and we have them especially in our thoughts at this time.

For our small island States, these climate-related events are occurring with alarming force and regularity. We have it from the experts that powerful hurricanes like Georges could be linked to the "cold event" of La Niña, the contrasting weather phenomenon to El Niño, and that La Niña may be setting conditions favourable to more frequent and dangerous Caribbean hurricanes like Georges. These were the same events described by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea in his address to this Assembly last week, when he spoke of the damaging effects of El Niño, and by the Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji earlier today. They are events and disasters which demonstrate and underscore the extreme exposure and vulnerability of our island communities.

AOSIS welcomed the action authorized by this Assembly last year towards early understanding of the El Niño phenomenon and its impacts, and we fully support the United Nations system-wide strategy now being developed. We welcome in particular the proposals initiated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to reduce the impact of environmental emergencies through early warning and preparedness, especially in the case of El Niño/Southern Oscillation. We note in this connection the importance of practical support for such initiatives, especially the generous financial donation from the Ted Turner Foundation.

In Barbados in 1994, at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the international community recognized their special characteristics and needs and adopted a specific Programme of Action to address these needs. The United Nations Agenda for Development, adopted last year, reinforced the acknowledgement of special circumstances and stressed the need for international support to help island communities with their development efforts.

The months ahead will be a critical time for our countries as we work towards the first five-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action next year at the two-day special session of the General Assembly. The review will be carried out against the background of the appraisal of Agenda 21 and the assessment arrived at by the world's political leadership then that the overall trends with respect to sustainable development are worse today than they were in 1992.

The conclusions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its sixth session earlier this year, which reviewed several chapters of the Barbados Programme of Action, highlighted the continued vulnerability of small island developing States, particularly to climate change, and the critical need for capacity-building in such areas as the management of wastes; freshwater biological resources; and science and technology. Placing priority on human resource development and the transfer of appropriate environmentally sound technologies are essential. Our national institutions and administrative capacities have been hampered by a severe lack of financial and technical skills, and the use of regional institutions and mechanisms for coordination needs to be strengthened or supplemented.

We look forward to engaging the international community in detailed dialogue on these aspects at the donors' conference next February and during the other review preparatory processes next year. In doing so, let there be no doubt about our own determination in the matter, for the primary responsibility for the success of the Barbados Programme of Action lies with the small island developing States, first and foremost. We will not be sidetracked from the ultimate prize of self-reliance, but we must be assured of the vital support of the international community.

The AOSIS countries continue to set high priority on the development of the vulnerability index and will follow with close attention the quantitative and analytical work which we believe must continue on the index. Recognition within the Barbados Programme of Action that small island developing States are a special case is further supported by the work of the ad hoc expert group on vulnerability indices, which reported to the Economic and Social Council earlier in the year. AOSIS takes particular note of the conclusion of the experts that, as a group, small island States are more vulnerable than other groups of developing countries.

Looking to 1999 and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, we warmly welcome the election of the Minister of Environment of New Zealand, The Honourable Simon Upton, as Chairman of the CSD at its seventh session and look forward to a successful year of consultations under his leadership.

The agenda for the Commission's seventh session is full and an extremely important one: oceans, our heritage; sustainable tourism, so important to our future; and patterns of consumption and production, for we know all too well the need to change if our children are to have adequate and right choices for their own future. We hope that all States will take full advantage of the continued constructive dialogue that we have had in the past and which we expect during the Commission's seventh session and the preparations for the review of the Barbados Programme of Action. The special session next year will provide an excellent opportunity to agree on the next steps to implement the Programme of Action, and to explore in a focused way the many difficulties which remain.

It is no accident that the first chapter of the Barbados Programme of Action deals with climate change and that it leads off with a clear statement that small island developing States are particularly vulnerable to climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise. Indeed, the assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is that small island States are the least able to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

We remain at the front line of this issue, an issue not of our making, and one that calls for urgent and concerted international action. With the passing of each season, small island States experience ever more serious impacts, and practical steps must now be taken to assist them, especially with the adaptation options that are available. The impacts of climate change put at risk habitats and fresh-water reserves, the very life force of our islands and communities, and thus the need for AOSIS to restate once again our profound concerns.

As the globe suffers what is on track to be the hottest year in recorded history, it is essential that the international community as a whole be formally and unequivocally reminded that neither the efforts made thus far in implementing the Framework
Convention on Climate Change nor the emissions reduction targets, on average 5.2 per cent, adopted in Kyoto last year, represent an adequate effort to stabilize greenhouse gases concentrations in the atmosphere at safe levels. We know from the IPCC reports that we need to do much more, and to do it immediately, by cuts of emissions of up to 60 per cent and more.

There is emerging scientific evidence, supported by experience in almost every part of the world, that climate change is indeed taking effect, with devastating impacts, from the forest fires of South-East Asia to the extra severe and unprecedented flooding in China and Bangladesh, to the blistering heat of the American summer. These events, backed by science, must continue

to drive the development of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

Developed country parties have an acknowledged historical role and remain primarily responsible for the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and they must be the first to accept the responsibility to redress the situation. They possess the skills and the capacity effectively to do so now.

It is not sufficient per se to point to the new mechanisms created by the Kyoto Protocol, for there are numerous uncertainties concerning the new mechanisms. They are supplemental to domestic actions and they need rules for governance and compliance. Nor is it sufficient to say that developed country actions are conditional on developing country commitments. In the judgement of the AOSIS countries, such commitments must be allowed to evolve over time and in line with a common but differentiated principle, as well as the other fundamental principles of the Convention.

There cannot be any doubt as to the major importance of the first steps taken in Kyoto, and of the quantum improvements brought about by the provisions of the Protocol. Notwithstanding the uncertainties I have referred to, we see a clear obligation on all parties to make every genuine effort towards early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and the implementation of its provisions. The size and the urgency of the problem require this of us all. It is the intent of the AOSIS countries to apply themselves in every positive and constructive way to help clarify such uncertainties. In this manner, we have submitted our suggestions and proposals in respect of several agenda items and in connection with the preparations for the fourth conference of the parties in Buenos Aires.

We would need to acknowledge that the science on climate change is imperfect and incomplete. But the fact that we do not know everything is not a reason for ignoring the evidence which does exist. In this connection, we are concerned by the actions of certain industry interests which seem yet again to be determined on undermining the existing credible and universally acknowledged scientific findings, findings of the IPCC and others on this matter, and so to work in a negative way to influence public opinion. Climate change is far too serious and too urgent a concern for all humanity to be the subject of such manipulation.

May I now turn briefly to address some additional issues which are of particular importance to my country, Samoa. First, we are deeply grateful to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his leadership and for the reform process he has initiated. Samoa fully supports the ongoing efforts to strengthen and revitalize our Organization to better position it for the challenges of the new era. We need to say, though, that it does not accord with any real sense of commitment to look to the Secretary-General for performance, while denying him and the Organization the means to do so. We, like so many other Governments, must repeat the call for all arrears to be made good, and for all contributions to be paid in full, on time and without qualification.

We are especially concerned about the failure, thus far, in reform measures for the Security Council and measures to deal with its current composition. Membership of the Council must be enlarged in both categories to reflect the realities of the present time and to enhance the Council's effectiveness and legitimacy. We think the situation of Japan and Germany deserves special consideration.

We believe very deeply in the sustaining power of international law in support of the Charter principles. The United Nations has been a necessary and a cohesive force in the elaboration of international law and rules for international cooperation, which now regulate a phenomenal range of human activity. An important and often overlooked fact is the comparatively high rate of State party adherence to international instruments and the acceptance of a wide range of obligations, whether on the environment, social development, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons or in so many other areas. The latest example would appear to be the Ottawa anti-personnel mines Convention, an unprecedented global achievement, which my own country has ratified, and which, by action of the international community, is soon to come into force. It is essential that all countries, large and small, take part in the creation of these rules for international conduct and behaviour. For small States, they constitute, ultimately, the most effective measure of protection.

Samoa was able to play a role in the Rome negotiations for the establishment of the International Criminal Court, and is a signatory of its Statute. We believe that the Court will contribute significantly to the international legal order and security, for it offers, for the first time, effective responses to serious crimes of international concern: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. The challenge now is to bring the Statute into force and to implement its provisions. We all have a duty to see to this, at the

earliest moment. As the Secretary General has said, it is an opportunity to take a monumental step in the name of human rights and the rule of law. Let me note here our welcome for the recent and very important findings and decision of the International Tribunal for Rwanda in respect of the offences of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Our Pacific region is one of peace, and we treasure our peace. But our security and environment have been put under threat by explosions and the testing of far too many nuclear weapons. We will continue with our quest for a total ban through the development and the implementation of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty, the second oldest of the international regional arrangements, and we call for the active participation and support of all nuclear-weapon States for the Treaty and its protocols. In like manner, we will give solid backing to all international efforts towards the final elimination of these weapons, in particular, the resolutions of this House on the landmark Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

Samoa condemns all testing of nuclear weapons, as we did the underground testing in the South Asia region earlier in the year. However, we have heard in this Hall encouraging statements by India and Pakistan, and we join others in urging that they commit to a lasting moratorium by becoming parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and that they adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Let me say also that we applaud Brazil's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We welcome these positive developments most warmly.

The United Nations remains a significant part of the modern development and progress of my country. It is with complete faith that we renew our commitment to the Charter. We do so as a small country and with abiding trust in the principles of the Charter and the most supportive concern for the welfare of the Organization.

The Acting President: I give the floor next to His Excellency Mr. Nizar O. Madani, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Madani (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. As much as his election reflects the esteem in which he personally is held, it is also reflects our appreciation of the positive role played by his country, Uruguay, in the international arena. I am confident that his presidency will be an effective factor in achieving the objectives to which the international community today aspires.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey to His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, President of the Assembly at its fifty-second session, our appreciation and esteem for having conducted the Assembly's work effectively, wisely and objectively.

I am also pleased to express my appreciation and esteem to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who is managing the affairs of the international Organization with high competence and experience, and who is making continuous efforts and persistent endeavours to achieve peace and security in today's world, which continues to face many kinds of conflicts and various forms of crises and challenges.

A hundred years ago this year, the late King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud began the initial stages of rebuilding and uniting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the principles of tolerant Islamic beliefs. In that process of unification, the late King Abdul Aziz was also laying the groundwork of a modern State which combines, on the one hand, adherence to Islam as a belief, a system and a way of life and, on the other hand, advanced forms of development and modernization. Since then, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which adheres to the religion of Islam, has played a significant international role, because it follows a foreign policy which conforms to the fundamental principles of the United Nations and with the noble objectives for which the Charter was formulated. These are in accordance with Islamic law in matters pertaining to the conduct of relations between States. The eternal message of Islam unites and does not divide, establishes justice and does not inflict injustice, promotes equality and does not discriminate. It urges everyone to work and cooperate to propagate these sublime principles and to achieve security, peace and prosperity for all humanity.

Abiding by these principles, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, since its establishment, has continued to believe in constructive dialogue and peaceful coexistence among nations and peoples. It endeavours to cooperate and to respect the principles of international law and international legitimacy, it rejects violence and terrorism in any shape or form, and it does not interfere in the

affairs of others or allow others to interfere in its own affairs.

On the basis of the same principle, the Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, is intent on performing its role in the international arena in such a way as to assist in creating the most favourable conditions for realizing the aspirations of the international community to security, peace, stability and prosperity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is proud that it was one of the original signatories of the San Francisco Charter, which founded the United Nations, and it is proud also that it constantly adheres to the principles and purposes of that Charter. It also consistently endeavours to put these principles and purposes into practice. On the basis of those considerations, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms that it earnestly supports the United Nations and its specialized agencies, for it views the Organization as a viable framework for cooperation among nations and peoples, an important forum for dialogue and understanding, and an effective means to settle disputes and defuse crises.

My Government wishes to emphasize a basic fact: the ability of the Organization to play all its roles and to carry out all those tasks depends on the political will to put those Charter principles and provisions into practical effect.

In this regard, my Government is well aware of the importance of modernizing the United Nations agencies to enable them to play their required role, and on a level that enables them to deal with the new developments in modern international relations. The Security Council, which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, remains the focus of the various reform proposals that have been put forward. In this regard, my country's point of view has been based on a deep conviction that any restructuring of the Security Council must be aimed at improving the Council's ability to perform its role effectively, in accordance with the Charter, and at making more active in implementing its resolutions and in dealing with international crises. The Council must also cooperate with the General Assembly in a manner that achieves the required harmony and the desired objectivity.

As we seek greater cooperation, we have to look to the lessons of history to identify the obstacles which the United Nations has faced and which have hindered it from enhancing the cooperation that has become a requirement for peace, stability and growth. We have to hold the countries which base their international relations on principles that contradict the Charter basically responsible for creating those obstacles, and to make use of the means contained in the Charter to oppose such practices. Insistence on violating the principles of the Charter and refusal to comply with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council signal a blatant challenge to the Charter, which we must firmly confront in a manner that is consistent with its provisions and purposes.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in line with its objective of achieving peace, security and stability in the Middle East, has supported the peace process from the very beginning and participated as an observer in the Madrid Conference. It has also participated actively in the multilateral negotiations, and will continue to support the peace process in its international activities and contacts.

In addition, the Arab countries, in conformity with the conclusions of the Arab Summit held in Cairo in June 1996, have unanimously adopted a firm position stipulating that peace is a strategic Arab option. This affirms that there has been no Arab retreat from that firm position.

What is regrettable, and a cause of grave concern, is that, after a glimmer of hope for peace in the region and after the optimistic feelings that peace was possible, the peace process — which started in Madrid on the basis of the principles of international legitimacy, United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace — has suffered repeated setbacks at the hands of the present Israeli Government. This Government has endeavoured to pursue policies that are based on retreating from the principles of the peace process endorsed by the Madrid Conference, as well as from the agreements signed with the Palestinian National Authority, and it continues to refuse to resume negotiations with Syria at the point that had been reached previously.

In striving to destroy the peace process, the Israeli Government has continued to build settlements on Palestinian lands in order to alter their character and create new realities. It is also adopting a policy of Judaizing Holy Jerusalem by planting more settlements in and around it, as well as annexing areas with Jewish settlers and emptying Jerusalem of its Arab residents. It also enacted a law to enlarge the municipality of Holy Jerusalem to include neighbouring settlements so as to preempt the negotiations on the final status of Holy Jerusalem.

These Israeli practices have resulted in aborting the efforts of the international community to achieve a just and comprehensive peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the land-for-peace principle. Such practices have led the peace process down a dead-end road. What we perceive of the behaviour of the present Israeli Government does not make us optimistic about the possibility of achieving the peace which the peoples of the region aspire to unless these practices are met by firm measures to compel Israel to completely implement its agreements with the Palestinians, respect the principles on which the peace process was founded and enter into serious negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, with Syria and with Lebanon. We urge the international community, and the United States of America in particular, to continue making all possible efforts to save the peace process and to act resolutely to stop Israeli tampering with the most sensitive issue in the peace process — Jerusalem, which should be dealt with on the basis of its being the most important case in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Adhering to the rules of international legitimacy and fulfilling commitments is the best way to achieve peace and security.

If the present Israeli Government is serious in its efforts to achieve peace with the Palestinian side, all it has to do is to affirm its adherence to the provisions of the signed agreements and resume the negotiations on the unresolved issues. If the Israeli Government intends to achieve a state of mutual security with its neighbour, Syria, the Syrian Government has spared no effort in declaring its readiness to resume negotiations with Israel from the point at which such negotiations had stopped. As for tension and the cycle of violence in southern Lebanon, its end is contingent upon immediate Israeli withdrawal from that part of Lebanon and the western Bekaa valley in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The position of the Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques towards Iraq has two fundamental bases: first, guaranteeing the comprehensive, total, indivisible and non-selective compliance by the Iraqi Government with the resolutions of international legitimacy; and secondly, insuring the preservation of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, as well as alleviating the sufferings of the Iraqi people.

Our feelings of pain and sorrow for the sufferings of the brotherly Iraqi people, because of the hard conditions which they endure, contribute to our insistence on Iraqi compliance with all relevant international resolutions in order to get the sanctions lifted. In this context, it is with deep sadness that we received the news of the Iraqi Government's decision not to cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission established by the Security Council. This will result in the continuation of sanctions on Iraq. We call upon the Iraqi Government to annul that decision, and we stress that the quickest means for lifting the sanctions is faithful and meticulous responsiveness, in letter and spirit, to the requirements of the Security Council resolutions. The Iraqi Government should stop the policies of prevarication and delay aiming at impeding the implementation of these resolutions, especially those concerning the release of prisoners and detainees, the return of property, commitment to a modality for compensation and full cooperation with the efforts of the United Nations Special Commission to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

Saudi Arabia and its sisters, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, place great importance on the bettering of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. We have been particularly pleased at the recent positive indicators from the Iranian Government which could have a positive impact on Iranian-Gulf relations and on the climate of peace and stability in the region. In this connection, we welcome the positive implications — regarding both Gulf-Iranian relations and the issue of armaments in the statement by President Mohammad Khatami before the General Assembly last week. We look forward to resolving the outstanding problems between the two sides — foremost among which is the issue of the three United Arab Emirates islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — by peaceful means, in accordance with the principles of international law, including the option of referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

We also express our concern regarding the current tension between Iran and Afghanistan. We call upon these two countries to exercise restraint and resolve their dispute by peaceful means.

The continuing fighting in Afghanistan during all these years is a cause of sadness and sorrow. Saudi Arabia has done all it could since the beginning of the fighting to stop the bloodshed and to restore peace and security to Afghanistan. We support the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to stop the fighting. At the same time, we strongly deplore the manipulation of the present situation of Afghanistan to make it a haven for the sheltering and

training of terrorists, which destabilizes security and brings further suffering to the Afghani people.

Shortly after the Serbs terminated their aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they ignited the flames of a new war, aiming this time at our brothers in Kosovo. The Serb forces are daily committing in Kosovo the same inhuman practices which they perpetrated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including ethnic cleansing, coerced deportation, terror and oppression in full view of the whole world. It would be truly tragic if silence in the face of these appalling actions was to continue over this long duration. Therefore we call upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities by promptly taking all requisite measures to put an end to these practices.

Terrorism, which is striking every corner of the world mercilessly and indiscriminately, has become a very serious international phenomenon and requires an international effort to combat it. The Government of Saudi Arabia has regularly condemned terrorism and has joined its efforts to other international efforts to confront it with all possible effectiveness. We stress in particular that terrorism and violence are universal phenomena rather than the characteristics of a certain people, race or religion. Precisely because of the comprehensiveness and universality of terrorism, the only way to combat it is through unified international action within the framework of the United Nations, with a view to ensuring an end to terrorism, saving the lives of the innocent and preserving the independence and sovereignty of States. But combating terrorism would also require international cooperation against sheltering terrorist elements and groups and preventing them from exploiting the territories and laws of the States in whose territories they live in order to practice their destructive activities, regardless of any pretexts.

The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir remains a threat to peace and security in South Asia. We call for finding a peaceful solution to this problem in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and for allowing the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise directly their legitimate right to self-determination.

The Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques pays maximum attention to the ongoing efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including the Arabian Gulf region. This is undertaken through its support of the efforts of the League of Arab States in accordance with the resolution adopted by the League's Council during its 101st session which called for making this sensitive part of the world a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical and biological.

We are greatly concerned by Israel's refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Israel thus keeps its nuclear programmes outside the ambit of international inspection, which constitutes a serious threat to the region's security and stability. While we completely reject the international community's double standard that allows Israel an exception from nuclear disarmament efforts and thus encourages the arms race, we also express our concern at the nuclear tests carried out in South Asia, begun by India and followed by Pakistan, in view of the dangers these tests present to the security and peace of the region.

While believing there is urgent need to increase the effectiveness of the NPT through the activation and universalization of the system of guarantees of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), we also consider it of the utmost importance to establish controls and criteria that would assist in achieving the desired progress in all fields of disarming weapons of mass destruction, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1 (I) of 1946. In this context, we urge all States that have not yet done so to take the necessary steps as early as possible to accede to the NPT and place their nuclear installations under the international safeguards regime, thereby contributing to international peace and security.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers environmental issues and environmental protection of key importance, to the degree that it has assigned to them a prominent place in our domestic and foreign policies. We believe that a decent life for mankind is directly connected with environmental and climatic conditions. Therefore, the Kingdom has effectively participated in all relevant conferences, forums and international organizations concerned with environmental protection. In addition, we have become a party to several regional and international agreements relevant to this issue.

We only hope that international efforts relating to the problems of the environment will be characterized by the necessary degree of balance and of objectivity, as based on serious and rational studies and buttressed by scientific facts that take into account the needs of development in the developing world. In this regard, we call upon all States to abide by Agenda 21. We also urge the industrial States in particular to live up to their

obligations regarding the transfer of environmental technology to developing countries.

The emerging forces of globalization and their seemingly rampant nature which cause geographic, political and sovereignty barriers to recede, force upon us the need to tame and channel these energies. Therefore, we are now called upon more than at any other time before not to confront this phenomenon, but to act cohesively in its formulation, in conformity with our religious beliefs, our cultural and civilizational values, and in the interests of our peoples. This should also be accomplished in a manner that would accord with the diversity and pluralism of social and political systems that have prevailed after the bipolarism of the cold war. The objective would be to build a balanced world based on mutual interest, reciprocity of advantages and equality of opportunity to live free from fear, secure from hunger and poverty. It would be a world in which principles of justice, prosperity and peace predominate.

It is important to stress, in this regard, that the principles of free world economies and open markets are not an end in themselves. They are but a means to growing the economies through the increase and expansion of exports. The developing countries cannot attain these objectives without greater flexibility in the varying opportunities afforded to them in the form of human resources, infrastructure, and financial, administrative and procedural regulations. Consequently, the developing countries are required more than ever before to intensify their internal development efforts in order to be integrated in the international economy. This calls for closer cooperation in international fora in order to deal with the issues of development and to draft a considered and comprehensive agenda that fulfils the ambitions and aspirations of the peoples of developing countries within the framework of the new economic order.

In this context, we cannot ignore the important role that needs to be played by the developed countries, who must fulfil their international commitments to the developing and less developed countries either by direct or indirect aid as well as through cancellation and rescheduling of foreign debt. Developed countries must also allow free and easy access to their markets for the exports of developing countries and must refrain from adopting unjust trade measures that impede the flow of such exports to their markets.

In this regard, it must be noted that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been very keen on contributing, within the limits of its means, to the development of developing countries, whether at the bilateral or multilateral levels. Because of its desire to participate in the efforts to achieve a better future for the international economy, Saudi Arabia has applied for membership in the World Trade Organization. God willing, and with the support of friendly countries, we hope to finalize the accession procedures as soon as possible.

The issues just mentioned, with their political, economic, security and social dimensions, confirm the need for our Organization to assume its role in the maintenance of international peace and security and to realize the aspirations of all peoples to live in security and enjoy stability and prosperity. Our firm belief in the role that the United Nations can play in dealing with crises, as well as our efforts to avoid the horrors of war and to prepare for international cooperation, make us more determined than ever to support this Organization and emphasize its constructive role. The United Nations must have a larger role in dealing with crises before they occur by exercising preventive diplomacy in order to maintain stability and preserve international peace and security. We have great hopes that the Organization will continue its march towards these goals with strong steps and firm determination.

I cannot find more suitable words to end my statement than this verse from the Holy Quran:

> "Work, soon Allah will observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers." (*The Holy Quran, IX:105*)

The Acting President: I now call on Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Khouna (Mauritania) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me first of all, on behalf of my country's delegation, to convey to Mr. Opertti my warm congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am convinced that his wisdom and experience will ensure that we are successful in our work. I wish also to thank his predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, who guided the work of the last session so skilfully.

I wish also to extend our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his constant and tireless efforts to strengthen the universality of the United Nations, to

enhance its credibility and to strengthen its ability to discharge its responsibilities despite a difficult international situation.

On 16 July of last year, the Secretary-General presented to the Assembly his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a Programme for Reform" (A/51/950), which provides an overall scheme to modernize the working methods of the Organization in order to give it fresh impetus and enhance its efficiency so that it is better capable of responding optimally to the growing needs of the international community on the threshold of the third millennium.

In this regard, we are convinced that implementation of the measures to reform the Organization will assist it in achieving its aims and objectives, namely restoring peace and security to the world and strengthening international cooperation in such a way as to achieve the economic and social development of all nations and peoples. In line with this, the question of reform and expansion of the United Nations Security Council has, for several years, been discussed. In this connection, we would like to reiterate our support for the proposals aiming at enlarging the representative base of that key body in accordance with the norms of democracy, transparency and justice and with equitable geographical distribution, enabling it to reflect the universal nature of our Organization pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter.

The threats facing today's world are not all political or military in nature. Some of them are economic or social and call for prompt and practical solution. The scourge of drugs and psychotropic substances and the ravages resulting from their consumption, marketing and distribution are among the most serious challenges facing us today. In this connection, I wish to express my delegation's satisfaction that awareness of the dangers inherent in this evil is steadily growing. This has been reflected in a very clear-cut fashion in the unanimous adoption, at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly held last June, of the Political Declaration and the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction.

There is no doubt that international peace and security on the one hand and economic growth, social development and the eradication of poverty on the other are organically bound up one with another. The United Nations and its specialized agencies have provided many measures to impress this reality on all of us. This approach has been manifested in the adoption of a large number of programmes and recommendations stemming from important international conferences and forums organized in the last few years under the auspices of the United Nations.

However, this enormous effort should be translated into concrete reality through a new mobilization based on partnership and solidarity. The first step should be to devote to these lofty objectives the tremendous resources allocated to the production, development and acquisition of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

On this basis, we must likewise enable the developing countries to speed up effectively their pace of growth. To this end, donor countries should augment their official development assistance, increase flows of investments, put an end to the continuous deterioration in terms of commercial trade, and give the products of developing countries free access to their markets without any hindrance.

Likewise, the debt problem, which constitutes a heavy burden for the economies of developing countries, should receive the attention that it deserves. The 1997 *Human Development Report* indicates that debt servicing on average absorbs a fifth of a developing country's export earnings, which is a significant drain on its modest foreign currency reserves and thus compromises its ability to take part in international trade on an equal footing.

In this context, we hope that the initiatives taken on the subject of the external debt of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries will make it possible to find a radical solution to this set of problems, which impedes these countries' development endeavours.

Despite the magnitude of the challenges of development and the wide range of priorities involved, and despite an unfavourable world economic situation, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, under the enlightened leadership of the President of the Republic, Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, has taken significant steps towards comprehensive development aimed at raising our citizens' standard of living and at consolidating democracy and the rule of law in a climate of tranquillity, security and stability.

On the political plane, therefore, pluralistic democracy in our country came to fruition with the holding on 12 December 1997 of pluralistic presidential elections, the second of their kind, in which several candidates participated in a spirit of healthy competition

and a climate of political plurality and freedom of expression. Furthermore, the third municipal elections, scheduled for the end of this year, are being organized successfully.

Alongside this democratic process, which embodies our people's aspirations to fully exercise its rights, our country is engaged in a decisive struggle to eradicate poverty and to combat illiteracy and marginalization, for we are convinced that genuine enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms cannot be fully achieved except through a sustained effort aimed at enhancing citizens' socio-economic and cultural level.

We have created an agency to deal with human rights, poverty and integration. That agency is responsible for promoting the exercise of human rights and implementing the national strategy to combat poverty. The budgetary allocations earmarked for social expenditure are approximately 37 per cent of all public expenditure — almost double the level recommended by the World Summit for Social Development.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is pursuing a foreign policy that is based on immutable principles aimed at fostering relations of good-neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence and strengthened regional and international cooperation. On the basis of these principles, my country attaches particular importance to the consolidation of stability and the containment of the large number of areas of tension around the world that are likely to threaten international peace and security and to jeopardize the development efforts of many nations and peoples.

While reaffirming its full support for the peace process in the Middle East, my country believes that no just and lasting peace can be achieved in that region until Israel has withdrawn from all the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese territories, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace. Such a peace cannot be attained until the Palestinian people have been enabled to establish their independent state on their territory with Al-Quds as its capital.

In this respect, my country expresses its profound concern at the difficulties besetting the peace process and the negative developments that have taken place in the region. My country also calls for taking the measures necessary for restarting peace negotiations on all tracks, and urges the two sponsors of the peace process to make further efforts to preserve the chances for peace in that region.

With respect to the Gulf region, we hope that all regional and international efforts will combine to bring about a return to stability and concord in the area. In this respect my country, while reaffirming its attachment and commitment to international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions, reiterates its repudiation of anything that could undermine the independence of Kuwait and its territorial integrity.

It also reaffirms its consistent position of rejecting any measure likely to threaten the unity of Iraq and the integrity of its territory. At the same time, it calls for the lifting of the embargo imposed for seven years now on the Iraqi people. The Iraqis have been very hard hit by this embargo, whose impact has been first and foremost felt by women, children and the elderly.

With respect to the Arab Maghreb, my country is acting, together with its sister countries of the Arab Maghreb Union, to develop cooperation and consultation, to respond to the aspirations of the peoples of the Maghreb.

As to Western Sahara, my country expresses its satisfaction at the positive steps taken within the framework of the United Nations settlement plan and reiterates its readiness to do its utmost to facilitate its implementation.

We call for the lifting of the embargo imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We hope that the recent positive developments will lead to finding a formula for a prompt settlement of this question, which has harmed the interests of the Libyan people.

In many parts of Africa, the situation remains worrisome because of conflicts and civil wars, with the attendant torrent of human suffering and destruction. These crises, along with other crises around the world, should be given more sustained attention by the United Nations, since it is the international community that bears responsibility for containing them and for acting seriously and effectively to prevent their proliferation. My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict in Africa and on ways of promoting durable peace and sustainable development. We also welcome Security Council resolution 1170 (1998), adopted last May, which authorizes a number of mechanisms for the implementation of the

recommendations contained in that report. We hope too that at its present session the General Assembly, when considering that report, will find ways and means of implementing the recommendations that fall within its purview.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania expresses its concern at the persistent conflict in Somalia and hopes that the Somalis will be able to find the path to constructive dialogue, in order to bring about a settlement that will secure concord and stability in that country.

In the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, we hope that the efforts undertaken by the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) will lead to a solution that will preserve that country's sovereignty and unity.

In Guinea-Bissau, my country welcomes the truce agreement signed last 26 August and supports all the efforts and initiatives aimed at restoring security and stability.

Similarly, my country urges Ethiopia and Eritrea to continue to comply with the ceasefire, in the hope that the efforts undertaken by the OAU will result in a fair settlement which will guarantee security and stability in the region.

With respect to the Great Lakes region and the serious developments taking place there, my country supports all endeavours to promote a return to stability and to bring about the reconstruction of everything that has been destroyed by war and conflict there.

Likewise, my country supports the regional and international endeavours to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone, so that that country may see the beginning of a new era of peace, stability, reconstruction and development.

It is regrettable that there are many other regions of the world where there is instability and conflict. In the Balkan region, the situation in Kosovo continues to worsen, compounding the suffering of the population and boding ill with regard to future humanitarian disasters comparable to those experienced in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This calls for decisive international intervention to prevent the situation from worsening further.

While war and conflict cause mass tragedies and mass destruction, the international community today is facing the phenomenon of terrorism, which cannot be contained within either time or place and which also threatens the peace and stability of all States and peoples. My country stresses its condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms, whatever its origins. We call for strengthening of cooperation and consultation at the international level in order to confront it resolutely and severely.

The world of today witnesses a gigantic leap in the increase of wealth, improvement of means of production, evolution of telecommunications and the informatics revolution. Although the developments offer conditions of comfort and well-being, they do, however, widen the chasm which separates the development and growth levels of the developed and the developing countries. This will exist as long as cooperation, solidarity and partnership do not prevail, until nations and peoples can together benefit from the advantages of globalization, and until the international community is able to give an impetus to international relations based on peace, democracy, justice and sustainable development.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kolawole Idji, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin.

Mr. Idji (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Benin, allow me to express to Mr. Didier Opertti my warm congratulations upon his brilliant and unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. His human skills and vast experience in international affairs, as well as his dedication to the main causes of our Organization, augur well for the success of the important deliberations of this session. My delegation would like to assure him of its full cooperation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, who so skilfully and devotedly presided over the last session of the General Assembly. Allow me to associate to this tribute Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, whose dedication and great diplomatic skills have given greater nobility to our Organization and new reasons for hope to our world. I should like to welcome here the efforts of this great African for the international community.

My country, the Republic of Benin, could be perceived as just a dot on the world map and perhaps just as a jot on the map of Africa. In fact, the Republic of Benin is not manufacturing any atomic bombs, nor has it any intention of building or possessing them. But it is

without any hesitation that I am speaking before the representatives of the international community and all the major Powers gathered here to express the profound concerns we have over the state of the world today, and to voice our hopes.

Benin may be only a small point on the world map, but it wants to be a point of convergence — not only in Africa, but also for the entire international community. We want to commit ourselves to building peace rather than bombs, and to promote international cooperation — and to promote it first at home.

The Government of Benin is committed to building peace by consistently cultivating tolerance and a spirit of sharing. There is no other explanation for the ever growing consolidation of democracy in Benin. Eschewing the words and customs of others, the people of Benin have boldly chosen a multi-party system after many years of curtailed political freedoms. In other words, they have chosen a politics of peace and tolerance. Today more than 100 political parties vie against each other, unite or clash, but they do so in peace and with respect for the Constitution and the law.

My delegation believes that there is no more urgent task today than replacing the culture of violence and war which has marked humanity since the dawn of history and which has so overwhelmed and gravely afflicted Africa and other regions of the world. That culture must be replaced by the culture of peace. We believe that the foremost duty of our Organization continues to be the promotion of peace and all its values and the behaviour that underpins and strengthens it.

We believe that the first of these values is the spirit of sharing. There can be no peace in the world if a small portion of humanity can surf the Internet and explore interstellar space while others flounder in quagmire, seeking a mere pittance or safe shelter in their flight from wars whose root cause is a desire to retain power — the power to control land, gold, oil, diamonds and other natural resources solely for the benefit of arms dealers.

This apocalyptic picture is unfortunately typical of the sad situation in Africa. It is therefore important to unite all our efforts to halt all conflicts, not only in Africa, but also in Europe, the Balkans — indeed, wherever they arise.

The spirit of tolerance and sharing has prompted my Government to develop the concept of a common social minimum. This means that all citizens of Benin, wherever they reside, must be able to feed, house, clothe, care for and educate themselves. It would be desirable for a common social minimum to be proclaimed as an essential objective on the global scale.

I should like to pause here to commend the efforts and great sacrifices made by various Governments and international organizations — particularly the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations itself — to restore peace to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Whether in Africa or the Balkans, what lasting solution can possibly be imposed by force of arms today? Why do Mr. Savimbi and those who support him, either covertly or overtly, refuse to see that the time for peace has come for the martyred people of Angola?

With respect to all those conflicts in Africa, the Republic of Benin welcomes the report (A/52/871) presented by the Secretary-General at the request of the Security Council on the causes of conflict in Africa. The Secretary-General's appeal deserves to be heard and supported, not only by Africans but also by all those whose political, economic or financial decisions will influence the future of the continent.

If the spirit of peace, sharing and tolerance prevailed in the Middle East, the long-delayed peace would undoubtedly be established there. We have learned in recent days of the efforts which have been resumed so many times by the United States of America to end the stagnation of the peace process, for which Mr. Netanyahu's Government is principally responsible. Let us hope that peace will have a better chance this time.

One of the main items on our agenda is the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and the banning of nuclear tests. In this connection, the Republic of Benin welcomes the decision by India and Pakistan to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have no particular lesson for those two great countries, which are our friends. But it is clear to us that the possession of atomic bombs cannot offer either of them a lasting victory; only a prosperous country and people can confer that.

Humanity will continue to be under threat until the current stockpile of nuclear weapons is destroyed. The major nuclear Powers must today admit this self-evident truth.

While nuclear weapons pose a permanent danger to us all, small arms in my country sow permanent insecurity and hamper our economic development efforts. Last May a group of heavily armed gangsters attacked a bank in broad daylight right in the middle of Cotonou, killing security guards and making off with tens of millions of francs. If small arms were not available, such incidents and armed conflicts would certainly be less common, and outlaws would not be as terrifyingly effective as they are today in numerous countries where ill-equipped police and militias cannot resist them. The massacre must be stopped, first and foremost by dealing with those who are primarily responsible — the producers and exporters of small arms.

That is why Benin supports the conclusions of the International Conference on the Proposed Moratorium for Small Arms Transfers in West Africa, which was held in Oslo, Norway, from 1 to 2 April 1998.

It has been said that a hungry man is not a free man.

I have spoken at length about arms, conflicts and wars because, basically, my delegation is hopeful that by banning the former we can more easily end or at least diminish the latter.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is important to emphasize that the affirmation of human rights must go hand in hand with the eradication of poverty. We cannot speak seriously about human rights, liberty or democracy in a country where the people have neither bread nor schools.

My country hopes that bold and vigorous measures will be taken, particularly by the richest countries, so that those whom globalization leaves inexorably by the wayside can be given a chance to enter the twenty-first century with a little more hope. The bold measures must relate in particular to the issues of debt and the allocation of additional resources for development.

Like many other countries in Africa, Asia and America, the Republic of Benin has taken control of its destiny by carrying out reforms that have often proved very difficult. Even if our development partners are standing beside us, these reforms and efforts express first and foremost the desire of our States and our peoples to take charge and to emerge from underdevelopment and poverty. And we have begun to obtain results. In my country, for example, economic growth has now surpassed demographic growth.

We must carry our burden even if we have to do so on our knees; we must not let it fall. I therefore call upon all those responsible for making economic decisions at the global level to support more vigorously the efforts of countries whose burden has brought them to their knees.

In this context, I should like to reaffirm the importance that the Government of Benin attaches to the operational development activities of the United Nations system, which, we are pleased to say, are aimed at enabling the recipient countries to take control of their own development. We believe that the decline in contributions to core resources for funds and programmes such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is a dangerous handicap. The Government of Benin hopes that the donor countries will demonstrate greater solidarity by increasing the resources that they allocate to those institutions.

Nevertheless, I should like to thank all of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations whose technical and financial support in the past five years has been decisive in enabling us to pursue programmes aimed at constructing a State based on the rule of law and building a prosperous nation in which all the citizens of Benin can have a minimum of their common social requirements met. I should also like to welcome all the initiatives of the United Nations system, which have long been working for the development of Africa, as well as the actions of all our development partners, in particular Japan, which have ranked the development and economic recovery of the continent among their priorities.

Although they may be positive and praiseworthy, initiatives to benefit Africa must henceforth meet the fundamental needs and priorities of the African countries. It is in this spirit that in several days' time Benin will be participating in the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II). Our hope, which many others share, is that that Conference will go beyond the declaration that will no doubt be adopted and lead to a programme of concrete action aimed at finding solutions to the problems of the continent at the close of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of my statement I referred to the spirit of tolerance and sharing. I believe that our Organization is the pre-eminent forum in which we can learn and refine this spirit. Despite all the criticism, the United Nations has, to date, proved irreplaceable. We must continue to try to refine it and to carry out reforms.

In conclusion, therefore, I would like to reaffirm that the reform of the United Nations, which was begun under the bold initiative of Mr. Kofi Annan, deserves to be supported and developed so as to guarantee the necessary conditions for the harmonious pursuit of the process of democratizing international relations at the dawn of the next millennium. If we want to begin the twenty-first century with self-confidence, and if we want the efforts and sacrifices that have been made thus far on the tortuous and rugged path to development not to have been in vain, we must do our utmost to focus greater attention on the principle of world partnership and the duty of solidarity, which is what the new international order necessarily implies.

The twenty-first century may become one in which a blind global economy using the most sophisticated science and technology at the same time enslaves three quarters of humanity. This must not happen. Let us act now so that the next century can become the century of civilization par excellence, the century of sharing and of solidarity, the century of culture and the century of peace. The Republic of Benin is ready to play its part in this necessary struggle.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, His Excellency Mr. János Martonyi, on whom I now call.

Mr. Martonyi (Hungary) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. There is no doubt that his experience and wisdom will be very useful in effectively guiding our work. I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for his valuable contribution to the work of this Organization and its reform process.

After the euphoria following the end of the cold war, a period of frustration and disillusionment set in. It has therefore not always been easy to remain optimistic while experiencing everyday realities. Indeed, the profound changes that shook the world left it poorly prepared to deal with old or new challenges.

Recently, events that have shaken the world's security environment and the international economic environment have reminded us of the complexities of the post-bipolar period by highlighting the multiple and often detrimental effects of the inexorable process of globalization that is taking place in all parts of the world. If we are to be in a position to stem the damaging effects of this process, we must strengthen multilateralism and expand international cooperation so as to be able to resolve the various problems, often unprecedented in nature, that face humankind at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

In this undertaking, the United Nations will be neither a world government nor a passive spectator. It will continue to be a unique Organization with special responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. It will continue to be a global negotiating forum whose purpose is to set consensus-based standards and rules in the most diverse spheres of human activity in order to help us adapt to the demands of a new age.

Today's world is marked by disquieting developments: bloody conflicts, terrorist acts, organized crime, the resurgence of ethnic hatred, attempts to circumvent or undermine non-proliferation regimes, human rights violations causing flows of refugees, problems associated with narcotic drugs, a worrisome gap between the levels of economic and social development of the various parts of the world, environmental degradation, population questions and many other issues and dilemmas that are truly global in nature. Despite the setbacks that it will probably encounter in the future fulfilment of its mission, the world Organization will continue to be the centre of worldwide mobilization of efforts to prepare the peoples of the United Nations to tackle the challenges that lie before them.

In order to ensure the success of this operation, we must all make serious and sustained efforts to give new impetus to the United Nations reform process and to maintain its dynamism. The difficulties encountered along the way should not discourage us from the quest to identify what is possible and feasible, while keeping in mind and striving to achieve what is desirable.

From this rostrum, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to promoting the revitalization of our Organization and the reform of the Security Council. As far as expanding the membership of the Council is concerned, our position has not changed. We continue to advocate expanding the Council in both categories,

permanent and non-permanent, and the inclusion of Germany and Japan, among others, in the category of permanent members. On the subject of United Nations reform, I should like to add that organizational and structural measures must go hand in hand with efforts to establish financial stability for the Organization if they are to be effective.

Domestically the historic transition that has taken place in Hungary over the last decade has been a complex and difficult experience for the country's population. After living through this arduous period and in the light of the promising developments in the country, our country today needs to be reassured about its future. Our people wish to see moral and social renewal in the country and to benefit from it. Externally, the new Hungarian Government continues to base its policy on the same principles that its predecessors followed starting in 1990, when a democratic regime was established in Hungary. It is inspired by the national interests of the country and the values that it shares with its partners on both sides of the Atlantic. It intends to remain a factor for stability and security in the Central European region. Along with its future allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and in the European Union, it stands ready to contribute to the endeavours of the community of nations to ensure respect for international obligations and, where necessary, to take effective measures to resist actions that are in defiance of its legitimate will.

Our efforts, which are aimed at having Hungary join the Euro-Atlantic consolidating structures, are motivated by our desire for security and economic prosperity, as well as by the emotional desire to see a historic reunion with the rest of Europe after a long, imposed separation. These aspirations are fully in keeping with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Not only do they not conflict with them, but they complement and enrich in a very positive way our present activities in the world Organization. They will serve to strengthen our specific participation in various United Nations activities. Obviously, becoming a member of these consolidating structures will not change Hungary's place on the world map. It will not be transported to some other planet. It will remain an integral part of our world, sharing with other nations great and small, rich and poor, the bright as well as the gloomier aspects of globalization.

Problems such as international crime and terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, drug-trafficking and questions associated with migration or environmental pollution — all these phenomena affect my country as they do others, and call for national, regional and international action. They may jeopardize the institutional structures of democracy and paralyse social and economic stability in a particular country and beyond its borders. The resurgence that we have seen in acts of terrorism should also bolster the international community's determination to establish international cooperation on the largest possible scale so as to combat this evil by the most efficient means. The centre of these operations should be the United Nations, which will give these endeavours coherence and real universality.

Hungary attaches great importance to developing and expanding regional and subregional cooperation with its neighbours. It has a vital interest in seeing stability and democracy flourish among its neighbours. It considers the various forms of regional and subregional cooperation to be invaluable and indispensable tools for achieving these objectives. It is ready to participate actively in this regard.

It should be noted that one of the driving forces for the implementation by the countries of the region of positive measures for socio-economic progress is precisely their shared wish to join the structures of Euro-Atlantic integration. Hungary has often spoken out in favour of these aspirations and will continue to support them.

In this regard, we feel that respect for the rule of law and institutional guarantees of the full enjoyment of human rights, including those of national minorities, are not simply key prerequisites to membership of these integration structures. They are also an indispensable and vital factor for the establishment of social peace within countries themselves.

In speaking of the eastern part of our continent, I would emphasize that, on the one hand, it is impossible to transform the region, with its turbulent history of age-old coexistence between various ethnic communities, into a zone of tranquillity and prosperity, and inconceivable to consider healing the deep wounds inflicted by aggressive nationalism without taking into account the legitimate aspirations of national minorities and their desire to remain intact as communities and keepers of a specific national heritage, in accordance with the standards adopted by the competent international organizations and the practice of the democratic States. On the other hand, we resolutely oppose the policy of "ethnic cleansing", forced separation and the creation of

new kinds of ethnic or religious segregation in Europe at the dawn of a new century.

Hungary is deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in Kosovo. It shares the view that, without a determined international commitment, this conflict is likely to spread, with unfathomable consequences for the region and Europe as a whole. We therefore support the efforts aimed at stopping this conflict as quickly as possible by peaceful and political means. We believe that Security Council resolution 1199 (1998) can serve to pave the way for this. Hungary hopes that substantive negotiations between the parties can begin without delay and that they will lead to a lasting settlement granting broad autonomy to Kosovo while preserving the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In this respect, Hungary stresses the primary responsibility borne by the Yugoslav authorities in the quest for peace and a democratic solution.

The Balkans have suffered too much for the international community to permit an escalation of violence, a return to terror and impunity for human rights violations. My country is prepared, to the extent of its abilities, to contribute to the international community's action to restore long-term stability and the rule of law in the region.

We have also followed with special attention the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our primary objective is the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement. However, we must accept the fact that, following years of bloodshed, savagery and intolerance, the process envisaged in the Agreement could be more precarious and protracted than we believed and that the ethnocentric and exclusionary attitudes there may prove to be more entrenched than we had thought. Having said this, we are participating actively in the international effort to assist that country in getting back on its feet and to ensure that the terrible years of aggression and horrendous war never return.

This year, we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although the commemoration of the birth of that fundamental document is a fine occasion for festivities, it is also important that new measures be taken to implement the universal standards embodied in the Declaration so that the United Nations may, in all places and at all times, not only offer a ray of hope, but be an effective instrument in the service establishment of United Nations machinery for the international protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the international community's great achievements, emanating directly from the Universal Declaration. In this context, we welcome the existence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the establishment, after much hard work, of the International Criminal Court.

Grave and large-scale human rights abuses continue to be committed throughout the world. We have witnessed assaults on the freedom of individuals and communities, and crude and more subtle discriminatory practices, including those based on national or religious origin. This prompts us to ask the fundamental question as to whether the international community did all it needed to do in good time to prevent these events and used all the means available to it. I am afraid that the answer to these questions is "no".

Linking peace to justice and reconciling political expediency and moral considerations have always been extremely difficult challenges. Nevertheless, if peace is to last and take firm root, it must be sustained and bolstered by democracy, the rule of law and a responsible and transparent system of government. That is why we support the introduction of the human rights dimension into all United Nations spheres of activity, including peacekeeping operations. That is why we insist that those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the various conflicts, from the Great Lakes to the former Yugoslavia, must be brought to justice. The measures taken in this regard deserve the support of all the Members of our Organization.

Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We cannot allow our attention to be distracted from the grave ongoing situations in many regions of our world, where political upheaval, financial crisis and natural disaster render human existence extremely precarious and arduous. The United Nations cannot turn its back on these pressing problems. We welcome the attention rightly accorded to Africa by the Organization and to the search for solutions to its difficulties. Our world is shrinking every day. Therefore, a heightened awareness of worldwide concerns and human solidarity is vital. For what is at stake today is the future of our civilization and the quality of life of future generations on Earth. We must not miss the opportunity offered by the end of the century to decide how to improve the lot of the human race. The United Nations is the best place to tackle, without delay, the crucial questions facing mankind.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra, His Excellency Mr. Albert Pintat-Santolària.

Mr. Santolària (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text furnished by the delegation*): I would first like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, Mr. Didier Opertti, of Uruguay, and to give him Andorra's unconditional support during this year of reforms. I would also like to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his important contribution to the debates of the fifty-second General Assembly.

We are now celebrating the fifth anniversary of the admission of Andorra into the United Nations. It is therefore fitting to begin my speech today with an assessment of what motivated Andorra's entry into the United Nations and the tasks that its Government has accomplished. Andorra wanted to become a part of the Organization in 1993, immediately following approval by the Andorran people of a modern Constitution that affirmed its sovereignty and brought to modern times thirteenth-century texts, texts which had guaranteed independence and neutrality for more than seven centuries. Andorra's international standing required it.

Nevertheless, neutrality has never signified for Andorra isolation or a lack of self-determination. To the contrary, during times of great European conflicts, and during the Spanish civil war, Andorra opened its doors to those who fled terror and violence.

Being a sanctuary of peace for so long has given Andorra certain international responsibilities, enumerated in the new Constitution of 1993, which says that the Andorran people shall persevere in the advancement of values such as justice, democracy and social progress, and keep and strengthen the harmonious relations of Andorra with the rest of the world, based on mutual respect, coexistence and peace in the desire to bring its strength and collaboration to all the common causes of mankind.

The entry of Andorra into the United Nations has been a most important step for our country, giving us the opportunity to make ourselves heard, to express ourselves and to be a part of the forum which includes all countries; we must respond with solidarity, aid and our best efforts to attain peace, liberty and full adhesion to the International Declaration of Human Rights.

I am speaking in Catalan, the language of Andorra. It is an old Latinate language, an important part of our cultural identity, and it is an honour to speak these words in this language to the Assembly today. It is also proof of one of the most difficult rights to assume: the right of difference.

In Andorra, protected by the Pyrenees mountains, we are proud of our 720 years of uninterrupted peace and self-government. We have a population of over 65,000, composed of more than 60 nationalities. We have acquired, with the passage of time, certain experience in conjugating the verb "to tolerate", because of the diversity of our population, of which "Andorrans" are a minority, the importance of immigration and the plurality of nationalities, cultures and languages. These are facts, which conform to modern societies.

Permit me to expand on certain aspects of our country in order to emphasize our desire to cooperate in shared projects and to struggle against aggression and repression, and for harmony between peoples, cultures and civilizations. The particular sentiment that our little country feels before this Assembly is appreciation of the difference between globalization and particularity, the paradox between material progress and world poverty.

Our confidence in this Assembly is absolute, and I shall give two reasons. First, we consider here the grand strategies we can adopt to pursue justice, democracy and the rule of law. Secondly, this Assembly is a common house, where all are equal under the law and all States can express their concerns to the world in an international assembly.

The politics of Andorra at the United Nations inspire me to make a general reflection within this institution. In the last few years, the directives of the Government of Andorra concerning United Nations reform have been very clear: absolute adherence to the reform projects of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, since his election, has worked to achieve the restructuring of this Organization.

I am pleased to say that Mr. Annan is aided in seeking to attain his goals by the Deputy Secretary-General, who has helped him bring about his objectives, and I would like to congratulate Mrs. Louise Frechette, who, in the months since she assumed her position, has helped immensely in the difficult task of reforming this institution, employing all the skills of a person of her diplomatic abilities.

With respect to the reform of the United Nations, Andorra has shown a desire for transparency and greater access for the General Assembly to the workings of the Security Council. We would also like to make clear our desire for an increase in the membership of the Security Council, to reflect the increasing membership of the United Nations. The Working Group on the reform of the Council will sponsor debates and present alternatives, and we will present our ideas.

The most important theme of my speech today is the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Andorra has strengthened its political structures in the light, always brilliant of that 1948 Declaration, which indeed, is given form in our Constitution. Article 5 of this document incorporates it into the judicial structure of the State in the phrase:

> "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is binding in Andorra."

This Declaration, shared by so many States, should not be seen as Utopian. The proliferation of publications and seminars concerning the analysis and investigation of human rights, understood more and more as a means of ensuring a proper relationship between the individual, the community and the environment, touch on the grand systems of classic thought.

The practice is deceptive. At the international level, none of us can ignore the paradox of great wealth contrasted with the abuse, the aggression and the most sinister forms of cruelty without limits. Today we know much of what happens in the world and very probably many of us know why. We cannot now return to ignorance, to lack of knowledge, to lies.

In a more immediate framework, we cannot argue that things are getting better. How can we respect the individual and his fundamental rights if the proliferation of armed conflicts, racism, xenophobia and the marginalization of others continues?

Tolerance and respect are not new terms, but they are key concepts, which must be reinvented or rediscovered, given a greater significance and a universal application. Too often tolerance is confused with condescension, and respect with bureaucratic formality.

The danger increases when we become blinded by absolute truths and dogmatic positions which, in one way or another, lead to authoritarianism and exclusion, which are precisely the opposite of toleration and pluralism.

This is written in the third book of the Pentateuch, Leviticus:

> "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". (*The Holy Bible, Leviticus 19:18*)

These are old and perennial moral statements, which shape society, and which have always been universal values incorporated in all the great statements on human rights.

On 10 December we will celebrate the passing of 50 years since the signing of the Declaration. It has become a banner of this body, and it gives it reason to exist and to work.

There remain much work to be accomplished and much evil to be fought. We are far from any moment of satisfaction. This century, which is about to end, contains few events of which we can reflect with satisfaction. The world has witnessed campaigns of extermination, holocausts and wars. It has all been extremely cruel and bloody. We can still see this black light in countries where assassinations take place under the guise of redressing religious grievances.

Many other examples can be cited to show that the universal application of human rights has not been achieved, and we feel the same sense of powerlessness when we see our friends and neighbours in the Mediterranean dying on the southern borders of Europe. Those who survive are lifted out of the opulence of Europe and deported, after false hopes and impossible dreams, back to the misery of their places of origin. This also occurs, among other places, on the Adriatic coast.

The Mediterranean is no longer the unifying sea that it once was. Rather it has been transformed into a barrier between the rich North, with its aging populations, and a South that, like Prometheus, is filled with misery — but also with young and struggling people more than half of whom are under 18. Can we not say, therefore, that a conflict is in the air? How far we have come from the stirring poem of Emma Lazarus, which, engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty, welcomed, with a door open to hope, the persecuted and the refugee.

Will the justice system become a mere spectacle? Even great dignitaries of great democracies, elected in a clear-cut way, are denied strict respect for personal and family privacy. The death penalty is still in effect in many countries. Child labour, child pornography, sex crimes, abuse and mistreatment are everyday occurrences.

Fifty years of universal human rights mean that we have rules by which to differentiate between good and evil, and a standard by which we can recognize the often inconceivably evil actions of those individuals or States who live without letting others live. Now, since 1948, we cannot turn away; we know who respects and who does not respect human rights.

The 1998 report of Amnesty International is once again the faithful portrait of a planet which is capable of immense technological progress and scientific advances that we can scarcely imagine, a planet with the ambition to conquer interstellar space, but nevertheless continues to be a world of terrible crimes. I do not believe that this should be an anniversary during which we offer only congratulations; we should also reflect critically on how we might effectively achieve respect for human rights. It is obvious that all of us here today have a clear understanding of the universality of human dignity: it is the most fundamental and absolute of rights. We possess faith in the human being as the means of political action and the giver of concrete meaning to personal liberty and the freedom of societies.

Democracy is a synonym for ironclad respect for human rights, without concessions, as the greatest guarantee of liberty and progress. What excuse could exist today for defending the notion that people do not have the capacity to elect public officials and to send them home through regular elections when those people believe that the politicians have not done well enough? It is clear that democracy is vulnerable when there is no sincere consensus on the rules of the game, and that this will lead directly to totalitarianism, corruption and manipulation.

Globalization is not only an economic phenomenon: with globalization, people have seen large States flower with democracy, and have seen that oppressive and authoritarian regimes do not lead to lasting economic success, as some have claimed.

Many institutions have made excuses for sins committed 500, 100, or 50 years ago. Must we wait half a century to apologize for the barbarous acts we commit today? We all bear responsibility. We should not respond only with words and good intentions, especially if we declare ourselves to be powerless before injustice and misery. Action by States will be the only acceptable response, for even if every citizen of the world could cooperate, we would still require force and the necessary instruments.

What can Andorra, a small State, bring to this world body? Since 1993, my country has made a great legislative effort to accede to a large number of conventions, which permits us to participate in the rule of international law.

From the point of view of security, Andorra desires to accede promptly to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, with international solidarity as our goal. Our humanitarian tradition made us one of the first countries to have ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

In the domain of international law, our presence at Rome during the negotiation of the treaty on an International Criminal Court was marked by active participation in the writing of the text, notably the first paragraph of the statute. I would like to thank all delegations who helped with the Andorran contribution, and particularly the United States of America.

Turning to international human rights legislation, we have over the years endorsed many human rights provisions. Andorra will accede to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which includes the abolition of the death penalty. We are also a party to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. At the United Nations, we give priority to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

I have the pleasure today to announce that I have taken the necessary steps to accede to other human rights instruments of which the Secretary-General is the depositary, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We are concerned too about universal problems such as terrorism, which must be combated without

concession, and illicit drug trafficking and the associated money-laundering, which must be prosecuted relentlessly. International cooperation and mutual assistance are the proper tools for this fight.

From a financial point of view, our per capita contribution is substantial, and we shall continue to contribute to United Nations funds relating to human rights, development and peacekeeping.

In the field of preventive diplomacy, I insist on the importance of words and diplomatic relations in moving the world forward, and on the implementation of the memorandum of understanding successfully negotiated by the Secretary-General last February on weapons inspections in Iraq; our Ambassador is a member of the Special Group on Iraq's presidential sites.

I believe that small countries without enemies or historical conflicts are in a favourable position to conduct discreet diplomacy and to play a mediation role to help ensure that important negotiations stay on track.

In five years on the international stage, Andorra has found its place in the concert of nations, and we are very proud to belong to this Organization. At the United Nations, we have learned much from excellent teachers about how to go from the realm of the national to the international and from there to the universal. Andorra affirms before you its belief in human rights, at the same time as we stand for world security, peace and preventive diplomacy.

During the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, Andorra will maintain this position and will work to participate in the reform of this international Organization, for now is the moment, at the beginning of the new millennium, to reinvigorate the United Nations, to make it a more effective instrument of order on this increasingly globalized planet.

Today no one is innocent; we all share the same responsibilities. We wish to participate actively with all the Members in tackling the task of building for a better age in an imperfect world in which all the peoples of the world are increasingly interdependent and increasingly demand, with greater determination and courage, the universal application of human rights.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Mr. Abdullah (Afghanistan): The urgency of the alarming situation in Afghanistan, particularly given the events of the past few months, requires me to explain why and how that situation continues to pose major threats to the peace and security of the world.

There is an evil triangle that is haunting our region. This evil triangle has imprisoned and terrorized an entire nation. It has almost engulfed our region in a major confrontation. The spread of this evil triangle like a plague is about to contaminate the entire area, setting off alarm bells from the Far East to the Far West, even echoing in faraway capitals of the world. The evil triangle I am referring to is one between: first, the Pakistani military Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI); secondly, branches of international terrorism and drug traffickers operating from Afghanistan; and thirdly, the infamous Taliban militia.

On 7 August 1998, two African capitals suffered major explosions, sending a shock wave of international terrorism throughout the world. The following day, nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist were ferociously gunned down inside the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-i-Sharif. According to Amnesty International, from 8 to 10 August thousands of ethnic Hazara civilians were killed in Mazar-i-Sharif. On 21 August 1998, Lieutenant-Colonel Carmine Calo, Military Adviser to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, an Italian national, was brutally murdered by two Pakistani terrorists on assignment in Kabul. All of these shocking events have one thing in common: the implementation of an anachronistic socio-political agenda by means of destructive force and violence and the adventurous hegemony of the Pakistani army in the region. These things pose a direct threat to regional peace and security.

Three major concerns — namely, terrorism, drugs and the violation of human rights — are originating in the Taliban-held areas of Afghanistan, but they are being instigated from across the border. During the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, on 3 September 1998 in Durban, South Africa, President Burhanuddin Rabbani brought these issues to the attention of the summit. In its paragraphs on terrorism the Final Document of the summit says it is imperative that no State organize, assist or participate in terrorist acts in the territories of other States or encourage activities directed towards such acts, including permitting the use of national territory or the soil of a neighbouring country for planning and training for such a purpose and or the

financing of terrorist activities. Paragraph 153 of the Final Document states that the heads of State or Government solemnly reaffirmed their unequivocal condemnation of any political, diplomatic, moral or material support for terrorism. We fully agree with the generally expressed view that the global phenomenon of terrorism requires a collective and concerted response.

Afghanistan, along with other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, also condemns the practice of recruiting, financing, training, using or supporting mercenaries as a violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Let us make it clear once again here that the Taliban are Pakistani mercenaries.

On 28 August 1998, pursuant to the deterioration of the situation stemming from a whole new series of military activities evidently directed by the cross-border ISI officers, the Security Council adopted an important resolution, 1193 (1998), for which President Rabbani voiced his firm support at the Durban summit. However, the response of the Taliban mercenaries and their cross-border patrons to the resolution — a major assault on Bamyan valley on 14 September, during which the most atrocious acts were committed against the civilian population of the valley — was yet another vow to continue their military agenda.

Presently, the only country that takes pride in recognizing the Taliban and in fact urges others to do the same remains Pakistan. The Pakistani meddling in Afghanistan — which has direct consequences for Pakistan itself and the entire region — has best been summarized in the Pakistani daily *The News* on 25 September 1998. I quote:

> "North-West Asia is in great trouble and the Taliban are the catalyst behind it. The Taliban have not just dragged Iran and the Central Asian republics into the conflict, they have also pushed Pakistan into a tense relationship with all its Muslim neighbours. What was supposed to provide Pakistan with 'strategic depth' has turned into a quagmire. Islamabad is now faced with yet another critical choice between either cutting Taliban to size or siding with them against friendly neighbours."

The article continues, and I quote,

> "If somebody thinks that with the Taliban victory a lasting peace will be restored in Afghanistan and peace dividends will start flowing in, he is sadly mistaken."

Headlines such as "Crises push Pakistan to the brink of disaster" in the Washington Post of 26 September are early warnings about a state of affairs that will affect the entire region. In fact, when a fragile and vulnerable country like Pakistan involves itself in a great game, as the Afghani people say, it digs its own grave.

Article 1 of the United Nations Charter calls for effective and collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. Consistent with this, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, over the past three years, has repeatedly warned the international community of the mounting threat to regional peace and security posed by the Pakistani Government's military intelligence service, (ISI), and its mercenaries, the Taliban, in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, these early warnings have all gone unheard.

Today, the exacerbated situation in Afghanistan and its menacing implications for the region and beyond are exactly what we deserve. The international community must admit that it has done too little in the face of the increasingly bold and aggressive ISI policy towards Afghanistan and has gone too far with its policy of appeasement towards the Taliban in their fight against the rest of the world. The Security Council must determine the existence of this threat to peace, breach of the peace and act of aggression by Pakistan, and should take appropriate measures against the perpetrators in conformity with Articles 41 and 42 of the Charter. The alarming situation in Afghanistan requires definitive action by the Security Council. It is time that the presence of about 28,000 armed Pakistanis in Afghanistan was dealt with in accordance with Article 39 of the United Nations Charter.

The Taliban's obstinately rejectionist and intransigent attitude towards peace and human rights is well known to the international community. Let us recall once again how the Taliban's retrograde militia, helped and patronized by their cross-border allies, visualize and conceive the events in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have their own answer to every issue raised by the United Nations and the international community. When asked to establish a broad-based representative Government, the Taliban reply that they have brought many parts of Afghanistan under their military domination and that this is a broad-based

representative Government. When requested to hold elections in Afghanistan, the Taliban state that elections are unIslamic. They say that other Muslim countries which adhere to the principle of elections have overlooked the true teachings of Islam. When told to respect human rights, the Taliban reply that they have their own standards for human rights. They say that human rights in other Muslim countries are not based on Islam.

In response to constant appeals to respect the human rights of women and reopen girls' schools, the Taliban, quoted in *The Washington Post* of 25 September 1998, say that

> "the countries that shout about freedom for women want to use them only for prostitution and entertainment until they get old and useless".

The Taliban say they know best what to do with women and girls.

When asked to put an end to drug production and trafficking, the Taliban say that, though produced in Afghanistan, narcotics are consumed overseas. They also say that drug production and smuggling, operations which the Taliban and some Pakistani military officers jointly maintain, earn them profits. When asked to hold negotiations with the parties to the conflict, the Taliban, again quoted in *The Washington Post*, say that their first priority has been to disarm the opposition and that negotiations will follow only then.

Peace has no place on the Taliban agenda. Even when Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, urged them to attend the face-to-face talks with us, held in Ashgabat on 5 April 1998, they did not participate. On 25 April 1998, the negotiations between both sides in Islamabad — under the supervision of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) — were unilaterally abandoned by the Taliban and the ceasefire observed at the request of the United Nations and the United States was pre-emptively broken by a major Taliban offensive north of Kabul. Because of the failure of the Taliban's military offensive, they returned the following day, 26 April, for further negotiations, but soon unilaterally and definitively abandoned the negotiations once more, as noted by the Secretary-General.

In essence, the Taliban's intransigence stems from their firm and stubborn conviction that the only solution is a military solution. This conviction is also indicative of the ideas of their Pakistani mentors, who are determined to dominate Afghanistan. Thus, any and all efforts to reach a peaceful solution have been intentionally thwarted. It came as a surprise to no one that the Taliban not only refused to attend the intra-Afghan gathering on 18 July 1998 in Bonn, Germany, which sought to initiate what was hoped would be the traditional grand assembly, or *Loya jirgah*, but also, one week earlier, condemned the all-Afghan gathering and launched major military operations, supported by the Pakistani air force, in northern Afghanistan.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan strongly confirms the views that have been expressed in this Assembly for years that there is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of foreign military and armed personnel and the return of the opposition to the negotiating table for a political dialogue aimed at achieving a lasting political settlement of the conflict, along with the formation of a fully representative, broad-based, multi-ethnic Government, are the main points that could ensure an environment of peace in Afghanistan and the entire region.

We are proposing such an intra-Afghan dialogue without delay or precondition, on the basis of the following principles, which emanate from our national platform and international commitment to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the United Nations Charter, as well to as our tenets and culture.

First, concerning the principles of Islam, the Islamic tenets and teachings are guidelines of supreme value, in compliance with which the future political system, the constitution and other laws shall be founded.

Secondly, the principle of democracy and pluralism shall constitute the mainspring of the future political system to be formed in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, concerning the principle of human rights, the observation of and respect for human rights — including the rights of women and girls to education, work and beneficial coexistence in harmony with the provisions of human rights instruments — are among the principles that shall be integral parts of any peace agreement. This shows our commitment as a member of the international community.

Fourthly, the principle of elections and the delegation of authority to local government shall be incorporated into any peace agreement as urgent and

necessary elements of confidence-building and as the realization of the will of the people. Local administrations and their leaders, including the members of provincial councils, shall all be elected. The central representative Government, to be equitably accommodating to all ethnic groups and segments of Afghan society, shall function constitutionally.

Fifthly, as to the principles of permanent neutrality and independence, countries of the region and the international community shall recognize the permanent neutrality of Afghanistan. Afghanistan will never enter into any political or military alliance against any State and Afghan soil will not be used as a base for hostilities against another State. International relations shall be conducted independently, in a manner consistent with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Afghanistan shall actively participate in the processes of regional economic cooperation, transit and transport or trade. It shall be a good partner in the community of nations.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan welcomes the meeting of the "Six plus Two" group, held at the level of Foreign Ministers in New York on 21 September 1998. Afghanistan fully agrees with the points of common understanding and expresses its firm support for the Secretary-General's decision to send his Special Envoy, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, to the region. Afghanistan remains committed to giving his mission its full cooperation.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan firmly supports the institutional reform of the United Nations, rightly referred to as a "quiet revolution" by the Secretary-General. Similarly, the establishment of a Development Account and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, among other innovations, deserve the support of Member States. However, the least developed countries and in particular those stricken by war, have to be given priority attention in this field.

In their Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, Member States promised to

> "give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established". (*resolution 50/6*)

This has to include the institutional framework of the Organization, namely, a Security Council with working methods and a composition that better reflect today's needs and realities.

The Working Group that has been mandated to examine this question will soon start its sixth year of intensive discussions. These discussions cannot go on indefinitely. It is time to set a concrete agenda and to act if we want to meet the challenges of the next millennium. Afghanistan therefore supports an overall reform which would make the Security Council's work more transparent and its composition more representative. This would mean permanent seats for the developing and the developed world, the latter to include global economic players such as Germany and Japan. At the same time, a sufficient number of non-permanent seats should be added to take into account the interests of smaller and medium-sized countries. The Charter therefore must be amended in order drastically to reduce the use of the right of veto, which is most undemocratic. The coming century requires a Security Council that conforms with the new landscape of the world.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Barbados, His Excellency Mr. Carlston Boucher, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Boucher (Barbados): It is my special pleasure to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti, as the honoured representative of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, on his election to preside over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, and to extend to him the full cooperation of the Barbados delegation. I wish also to express our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his effective leadership and management of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly — the reform Assembly.

This fifty-third session, which is coming to a close at the dawn of the twenty-first century, compels us to focus on the preparedness of the United Nations for the challenges of the new millennium. It could well be a historic session, if it resolves to equip and re-energize the Organization to seize this great moment.

The process of global reform is under way. Barbados strongly supports the proposals of the Secretary-General, particularly those aimed at improving the Organization's efficiency and effectiveness. My delegation is pleased with the encouraging start to this process. We would caution, however, against reforms that are driven unduly by staff reduction targets or predetermined by budgetary constraints. To do so could

well jeopardize implementation of the very Programmes of Action of the global conferences — from Rio to Rome — which constitute the global priorities endorsed by Member States.

Meaningful reform also obliges us to come to terms with the financial crisis which has constrained the Organization far too long, injuring its integrity and necessitating the use of creative accounting methods to keep it afloat. Prolonged non-payment of arrears by the largest contributor is not a proud legacy to the United Nations of the twenty-first century. Let us put this Organization on a sound financial footing through prompt settlement of arrears, without conditions, consistent with our Charter obligations.

Reform of the Security Council is also a key imperative if the United Nations is to remain relevant in the twenty-first century. In particular, the Council must better reflect the Organization's current membership, and it must conduct its deliberations with greater transparency.

The growing threat to global peace and security has put the Organization's capacity to cope under considerable stress, underscoring the urgent need to streamline and modernize its peacekeeping machinery. We envisaged that the end of the cold war would usher in a new era of peace and stability, but the changed nature of conflict has found the Organization's traditional machinery ill-equipped and the political will to act severely constrained, even in the face of unthinkable crimes against humanity.

That is why my delegation hails the successful outcome of the recent Conference of Plenipotentiaries held in Rome, resulting in the creation of a permanent International Criminal Court. This landmark Statute is a fitting complement to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we celebrate this year. We are pleased to recall that it was the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago that introduced the item on the creation of an international criminal court at the forty-fourth session of the Assembly, in 1989.

The post-cold-war world has not become a safer place. New eruptions of strife and the intractability of old conflicts have worsened the fragile political situation in many developing countries. Such instability has diverted energies and resources from the policy priorities of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Ninety percent of today's conflicts take place within countries, not between countries. And the majority of casualties are civilians, not soldiers; thus the heightened international concern with the loss of life and disability of thousands of innocent victims every year. Barbados therefore joined 121 States in Ottawa last December in signing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Its entry into force by 1 March 1999 will come not a moment too soon.

Barbados recognizes the growing danger under which United Nations peacekeepers carry out their duties and laments the recent loss of life at a number of stations. We appeal to all parties to conflicts to respect the neutral role of these brave and dedicated servants of peace, and turn to reconciliation and compromise; only then will they be able to foster the domestic stability that is so critical for sustained economic growth and for improving the living standards of their people.

The widening scene of strife and instability threatens global peace and security on a number of fronts. Stalled negotiations between Israel and Palestine have renewed our anxiety about the prospects for peace in a region weary of conflict. The arm of terrorism has now reached countries hitherto spared from this scourge. International trafficking in illegal drugs and arms — in particular, small arms — poses the most serious threat to democracy and society in small States.

Nuclear tests have created new fears about the proliferation issue. We will continue to support the goals of non-proliferation, leading to the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Barbados will continue to condemn, in the strongest terms, all acts of terrorism. We will work assiduously with regional partners, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, and the international community to implement the Barbados Programme of Action to fight the scourge of drug-trafficking.

The lesson of this security situation is clear. Remedies are beyond the capacity of individual countries, even the most developed. The reality of global interdependence demands a greater commitment to collective security goals and better coordination of actions against the global security threat.

I now turn briefly to another dimension of the global security problem — namely, human security. In this connection, let me acknowledge the debt of gratitude which developing countries owe to the distinguished Pakistani economist, the late Mahbub ul Haq, my friend

and colleague. More than any other, he made the human condition central to modern development thinking, especially through his pioneering work in the *Human Development Report* series of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). His intellectual contribution to the debate on sustainable development and poverty reduction was substantial. It focused policy attention on people, and in particular on the plight of more than one fifth of the world's population that lives in conditions of poverty and hopelessness.

This concern with the right to development for all people should be a central component of the discussion on globalization and liberalization and the impact of these phenomena on developing countries, especially the poorest countries. We believe the United Nations must be the conscience of the international community on behalf of the poor and vulnerable in this global conversation.

My delegation therefore welcomed the recent high-level dialogue of the General Assembly on the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications. We found the discussions instructive. There was broad agreement that the process of globalization has opened new possibilities for faster economic growth and improved living standards through the free flow of capital across borders. However, many developing countries have not yet shared in the fruits of this process. And while the benefits are obvious, the associated risks, though grave, are less evident. Who would have envisaged that the East Asian economies would be engulfed by a financial crisis of such a scale, and to such a degree of volatility and dislocation as to threaten the very fabric of their societies and, indeed, the global economy?

While many questions have been raised about the pros and cons of unrestricted capital flows which underlie this crisis, and the role of the Bretton Woods institutions in this global order, reassuring answers are few. Clearly, the crisis points in part to deficiencies in the global architecture and governance of finance. We discern a world economy so radically altered from that of even a decade ago that we are obliged to focus on the deficit in our understanding of how it works, and on how to design a new structure for its orderly governance. Since there is as yet no settled approach to adjustment policy towards globalization — in particular, measures to protect the poor and vulnerable groups — the voice of the United Nations must be raised in debate on these critical areas of enquiry.

Small island developing States, given their vulnerability to both environmental and economic shocks, are following with much anxiety these developments in the global economy. We welcome a number of ongoing studies on the vulnerability of small island developing States. In December 1997, an Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Vulnerability Indices for Small Island Developing States, convened by the United Nations Secretariat, concluded that as a group, small island developing countries are more vulnerable than other groups of developing countries. More recently, a high-level committee established by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and chaired by The Right Honourable Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados, held consultations with key international agencies, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), on the vulnerability of small island developing States, particularly in the current global situation.

As if to reinforce this reality, just a few days ago hurricane Georges dealt us a brutal reminder, wiping out in a matter of hours economic growth which took years to accumulate. We lament the heavy loss of life and the widespread destruction of property in a number of our sister islands of the Caribbean, as well as in the southern United States. We join in the appeal for urgent international assistance.

Barbados shares with developing countries the growing concern about the impact of globalization and liberalization, given its limited resource base and technical capacity. We recognize that adaptation to this irreversible process is an imperative, not an option, and that countries will pay a high price for policy of inaction. Barbados is therefore implementing a broad program of social, economic and institutional reform to better manage rapid global change while deepening its integration into the regional economy, especially the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The recent conference of heads of Government, held in Saint Lucia from 30 June to 4 July, marked the silver jubilee of CARICOM, and gave further impetus to the process towards a single market and economy.

In response to the increasing policy demands of globalization, CARICOM States have established technical machinery, under high-level political direction, to underpin regional negotiations under way within the hemisphere. These negotiations will lead to a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in 2005. This will be the largest and most differentiated of regional trading blocks.

We recognize that technical support will be required on an ongoing basis to ensure that small States develop the capacity to negotiate effectively, share equitably in the benefits of trade and secure transition arrangements on entry that will minimize economic dislocation.

At the wider international level, Barbados was pleased to host in May 1998 the sixty-seventh session of the Council of Ministers of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), as well as the meeting of the twenty-third joint ACP-European Union (EU) Council of Ministers. These consultations focused on future ACP-EU relations, in particular, the structure of cooperation following the expiration of the Lomé Convention in the year 2000.

Following those gatherings, Barbados assumed the presidency of the ACP Council of Ministers, which will today, 29 September, launch formal negotiations for successor arrangements to the Lomé Convention. Here again, the participation of CARICOM will be bolstered by the technical work and direction of the regional negotiating mechanism. CARICOM States will seek opportunities for fruitful cooperation and information-sharing with other ACP members during the course of these critical negotiations.

Even a passing reference to ACP-EU relations triggers our concern about the long-standing and still unresolved issue of banana exports from CARICOM States to the European Union. The WTO decision on this matter, if implemented, will have a devastating impact on affected countries' economies and on the livelihood of large sections of their populations. Moreover, it would create uncertainty about investment and the overall prospects for development in the region. CARICOM States remain deeply seized of this question and hope that a satisfactory solution of this grievance can be reached soon.

My delegation looks forward to the special session of the General Assembly in September 1999, at which the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States will be reviewed. Within the framework of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), we will participate actively in the preparatory process, including the planned donors' conference in February 1999. We believe that conference will provide a useful opportunity to foster support for a portfolio of priority projects that will boost implementation of this Programme over the next several years.

We attach similar importance to the meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development scheduled for April 1999, which will help deepen our preparation for the special session. That meeting will focus on sustainable tourism and oceans, the virtual lifeline of small island developing States. It will underline our concern with the preservation and sustainable management of our marine resources and highlight our anxiety over the use of the Caribbean Sea for the trans-shipment of nuclear and other hazardous materials through this fragile marine ecosystem. That is why CARICOM States will seek recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

The special session will be an important landmark in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Barbados is proud of this international Programme that bears its name. It remains a sound blueprint for policies which support the sustainable development of small island developing States, taking into account their special needs and vulnerabilities. We believe that with the continued cooperation and support of our international partners we can strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action and consolidate its long-term viability.

Let me conclude by saying that the fifty-third session of the General Assembly has before it many critical issues for consideration. My delegation believes, however, that none has higher priority than renewed commitment to this indispensable Organization and to the strengthening of its capacity to meet the challenges of the new millennium. Small island developing States believe deeply in the United Nations. It has placed their vulnerability firmly into the consciousness of the international community. But more than that, this is the only institution which embodies the goals of peace and security, sustainable development, democracy and social justice, which define our common humanity.

Barbados pledges its full commitment and support to this universal mission.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya, The Honourable Bonaya Adhi Godana.

Mr. Godana (Kenya): I would like to begin by congratulating the President on his unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am confident that under his able leadership and with his vast diplomatic experience, we shall have fruitful deliberations and a successful session.

Allow me also to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for the skill and sensitivity he displayed while presiding over the work of the General Assembly during its fifty-second session.

May I also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his untiring efforts to build a prosperous United Nations through the ongoing reforms to better meet the challenges of the next millennium. Although adjustment and reorientation can sometimes be painful, I am confident that under Mr. Annan's leadership the United Nations will continue to flourish. Kenya supports the Secretary-General in these efforts.

The General Assembly provides Member States with an opportunity to discuss and gain useful insights and perceptions on key global issues of common concern to the international community, such as securing a stable, peaceful and equitable world order. In this context, we continue to witness the presence of the United Nations in peacekeeping and peace-building, development programmes and humanitarian assistance in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas.

In our own region, for example, I wish to mention the good work of the Nairobi-based Great Lakes Programme, which operates under the auspices of the United Nations Great Lakes Task Force on Relief, Reconstruction and Development. This Programme is funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and contributes immensely to identifying the development priorities of the Great Lakes countries as they endeavour to make a transition from conflict to development. Furthermore, Kenya appreciates the timely response by the United Nations Disaster Management Team to drought and the floods caused by El Niño. In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP), continues to look after the needs of refugees in our country. All these efforts by United Nations agencies are commendable and need to be encouraged and sustained.

In the last 10 years, we have witnessed significant advances in democracy, respect for human rights and international cooperation. Unfortunately, this was also a period in which an estimated 4 million people were killed in armed conflicts. A majority of these conflicts, which now threaten international peace and security, are of an intra-State rather than inter-State nature. Currently, there are up to 30 civil wars and a much larger number of lower-intensity conflicts being fought around the world. This new pattern of conflicts comes with new problems and new challenges for conflict resolution. There is a need, therefore, to review the existing conflict resolution mechanisms so as to meet these new challenges. As the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict pointed out to the Security Council in June this year,

> "Both international and national actors need to take political, economic and social measures that can generate within communities a sense of hope in place of despair, a sense of inclusion and participation instead of exclusion, a sense of belonging instead of alienation". *(S/PV.3896, p. 5)*

The credibility of the international community is anchored in its ability to dispense just and sometimes radical solutions to important questions. I have in mind the commendable resolve of the world community to punish the perpetrators of war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law. In this connection, Kenya welcomes the work of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, as well as the International Criminal Court, which shall soon become a reality. The international community must demonstrate its resolve to pursue such criminal elements whoever and wherever they are.

Kenya supports the legitimization and strengthening of regional bodies in peacekeeping. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), under the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in West Africa, stand out as examples of regional organizations that have contributed immensely to peacekeeping in conflict situations. I should also underline the commendable role played by the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the conflicts in Croatia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Albania; Abkhazia, Georgia; and currently in the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia.

In Africa, the forces of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) reinstalled the democratically elected Government of President Kabbah of Sierra Leone and restored constitutional order in Liberia. The superb performance of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) in the Central African Republic also deserves commendation. In the Eastern African region, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

continues to promote political dialogue between the warring factions in the Sudan and Somalia. In southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has embarked on initiatives to address, *inter alia*, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

These regional organizations have made significant progress in conflict resolution and should be given due recognition and the necessary support. However, I would like to emphasize that the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security remains primarily with the United Nations Security Council.

The holding of special meetings on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa underscored the need for a concerted international effort to promote peace and security in our continent. During the special meeting on Africa held in September 1997 and the follow-up meeting of 24 September 1998, the Security Council observed that, despite the progress achieved by some African States, the number and intensity of armed conflicts on the continent remained a matter of grave concern. We share the view of the Secretary-General that durable peace and economic development go hand in hand. Kenya welcomes the challenge posed by the Secretary-General in the three broad areas he emphasized in his report: the necessity for Africa to rely on political rather than military responses to problems; the need to summon the political will to seriously promote good governance, human rights and democracy; and, finally, the necessity to undertake and adhere to various reforms necessary to promote political stability and economic growth.

While the general tendency is to seek ways of deepening political cooperation and economic integration, the unity and stability of some States, especially on the African continent, is being threatened by ethnic, social and other intra-State conflicts. In particular, conflicts in the Great Lakes region, Somalia and southern Sudan — and, more recently, the inter-State conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea — are of major concern to us. Kenya has been and will continue to be involved in efforts aimed at reducing tension in Africa and, indeed, beyond.

In 1996 and 1997, Kenya hosted the various Nairobi summits on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, indeed, the conflict in the southern Sudan, under the auspices of IGAD. More recently, President Moi met separately with the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea in an effort to secure their commitment to pursuing negotiations rather than war in their border dispute. These efforts have helped to complement the important initiatives of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and others and have, in our view, contributed to ensuring the avoidance of a full-scale war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. I trust the necessary goodwill exists for a negotiated final settlement in this conflict.

Regarding Somalia, we are concerned about the lack of progress in the efforts to restore normalcy and statehood to that country. Both the IGAD and the Cairo initiatives have stalled. However, the cessation of hostilities; the agreement by the warring factions in Mogadishu to have a joint administration for the hitherto divided city; and the reopening of the harbour and airport are encouraging. It is our hope that the parties concerned will resume serious dialogue sooner rather than later.

In June this year, the Security Council held an open debate on children and armed conflict. This is a matter of particular interest to Africa, where there are horrifying accounts of atrocities to which children are subject or in which they participate. We are painfully aware of the disturbing new phenomenon of "armed labour" in some parts of Africa and are therefore concerned about the possibility that children could be involved in these activities. There is the added dimension of the easy availability of illegal small arms which, as pointed out last week by Foreign Minister Jozias van Aartsen of the Netherlands, have the potential of destabilizing the whole region.

Children are our future and all should continue to support the work of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to safeguard and protect them in areas of armed conflict. To that end, my delegation reiterates the need for strict compliance by all Member States with the relevant provisions of international law.

Kenya believes that the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a crucial step in the fulfilment of one of the main objectives in the implementation of relevant obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We believe that our common objective should lead to complete nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.

It is regrettable that the perceived lack of serious commitment by nuclear-weapon States to moving rapidly towards genuine disarmament recently provided an excuse for others to conduct nuclear tests. There is

therefore a need for security assurances from non-nuclear-weapon States and, even more importantly, for urgent measures and renewed efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons. We expect the nuclear-weapon States to take their responsibilities seriously by seizing the initiative towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons from our planet.

The process of development during the past decade has been uneven. A number of developing countries recorded high rates of growth and have been able to accelerate development. However, many of the developing countries, especially those in Africa, have made modest progress. The disparities in economic growth among developing countries have largely widened. These conditions have taken place against a backdrop of rapid changes in the world economy, characterized by the twin processes of globalization and liberalization, which have become the hallmark of global economic policy. The preferential treatment enjoyed by a large number of developing countries under the Generalized System of Preferences and other preferential trading arrangements, such as the Lomé Convention, continues to be eroded.

It is imperative for the international community to strengthen commodity-dependent countries by means of expanded market access for their products, as well as support in the development of their technical and human capacities so that they may actively participate in the multilateral trading system. In this regard, my delegation would like to urge the effective implementation of the Uruguay Round results, especially with regard to market access for goods and services of export interest to developing countries.

Developing countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, have, during the past decade, undertaken many efforts aimed at attracting foreign direct investment. Unfortunately, these efforts have not yielded any significant inflows. International capital flows play an important role in the process of development. Kenya reiterates the need for increased access to international financial markets for the acquisition of finance on concessionary terms by developing countries. In this context, Kenya attaches great importance to the convening of an international conference on financing for development under the auspices of the United Nations.

The liberalization of financial transactions and the increasing freedom of capital mobility have become important policy objectives for many countries. The resultant need to grapple with massive international capital flows, coupled with the experiences of financial turbulence and turmoil in some Asian economies, has highlighted the need to reform the international financial system. On the Asian financial crisis, my delegation wishes to advocate measures aimed at the restoration of stability in the affected countries to avoid serious negative consequences around the globe.

The external debt problem of low-income developing countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, remains unresolved. The international community is called upon to take actions aimed at finding lasting solutions to the debt problem. On official bilateral debt, while we are gratified at the adoption of the Naples terms by the Paris Club, the slow pace of their implementation continues to be of concern. Kenya wishes to urge the Paris Club of creditor countries to revise the eligibility criteria so as to allow for the inclusion of all low-income developing countries. The problem of multilateral debt also needs to be accorded serious attention, taking into account issues such as increased concessional finance, debt cancellation, debt reduction and debt relief.

My delegation would like to express concern over the declining trend in real terms of official development assistance over the years. In this regard, Kenya wishes to call for the expeditious reversal of this trend by donor countries in line with their commitments in various United Nations resolutions and with the aim of meeting the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. The interdependence of the global economy makes it necessary for those of us in the developing world to call upon the international community, including the United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors, to support the implementation of strategies for the development of the developing countries and to give priority to financing for development and expansion of trade in those countries through mobilization of new and additional resources.

Kenya welcomes the appointment of Mr. Klaus Töpfer as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the elevation of the Nairobi centre to the level of other United Nations centres at Vienna and Geneva. As the United Nations proceeds with reform measures to ensure the efficient use of resources, it is imperative for the Organization to ensure maximal and rational use of existing facilities within the system to minimize waste. As host to the only United Nations centre in the developing world, we are concerned that facilities at the Nairobi Office continue to be underutilized. Kenya would appreciate seeing maximal

utilization of facilities at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT) to try and reach the capacity-utilization levels of Geneva and Vienna. In this regard, we wish to thank the Secretary-General for the various measures he has taken, aimed at improving this situation. Kenya, however, still urges that the various General Assembly resolutions on this matter be adhered to.

We also note that both UNEP and HABITAT need to be strengthened by streamlining their administrative and financial management. In this connection, Kenya welcomes the establishment of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, whose task is to provide recommendations for new measures to strengthen and restructure those two organizations on the basis of General Assembly resolutions 2997 (XXVII) and 32/162, while taking into account decisions and recommendations of the Governing Council of UNEP and the Commission on Human Settlements. The report of the Task Force captures the challenges we continue to face in this area. It states that human demands on the global life-support system continue to mount as poverty and affluence spread in parallel around the globe. Despite all the efforts made since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm, the environment continues to deteriorate in many parts of the world. Certain social, economic and technological trends are exacerbating these problems. Against this background, it is imperative that UNEP be strengthened through the provision of adequate and predictable financial resources to better execute its mandate, and that more vigorous and coordinated action be taken to respond effectively to these problems. In line with resolution 52/220, Kenya urges that energetic steps be taken on the funding from the regular budget of the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to enable it to discharge its mandate.

My delegation welcomes this opportunity to express its outrage at and condemnation of the criminal and unjustified terrorist bombings which occurred simultaneously in Nairobi and in Dar-es-Salaam on 7 August 1998. Terrorist acts are by design ruthlessly indiscriminate, and the bomb blast in Nairobi, which occurred at one of the busiest locations in the city in terms of human traffic and commercial activities, was no exception. It has so far claimed 250 lives, and the death toll continues to rise. Damage estimated at over $500 million was caused by the bomb blast.

The bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam brought mayhem and terror of an untold magnitude to our two countries, which had hitherto considered themselves secure and far removed from the threats and dangers posed by acts of international terrorism. These two incidents not only make it abundantly clear that nobody is safe or unaffected by such heinous acts, but also exemplify the expanding reach and growing menace of the perpetrators of terrorist acts.

Let me take this opportunity on behalf of the Government of Kenya to express gratitude for the generous assistance and support promptly made available in the rescue efforts by Governments and international organizations, and by volunteers who came from far and wide.

Kenya welcomes the General Assembly's adoption earlier this year of the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. In this regard, we wish to underscore the importance of enhancing international cooperation to combat terrorism in accordance with the relevant international instruments. We support the proposal of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries calling for the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to formulate an organized and concerted response by the international community to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Kenya will continue to participate actively in the work of the Organization and to bear its rightful share of responsibilities and obligations under the Charter. As we enter the new millennium, we should all contribute to the effort to chart a new course for a reinvigorated United Nations in a manner that fulfils the vision of its founders and meets the challenge of our generation and of generations to come.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. Several representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): The Libyan representative made several gratuitous references to my country that sadly reflect the hostility and isolation

from which Libya still looks out at the world. Such comments do not warrant specific response. Instead, on behalf of the United States, I would like to exercise my right of reply to encourage a quick resolution of this problem.

This morning the representative of Libya emphasized that it is essential to observe the principles of the Charter. We agree. Member States must honour all such obligations, especially those mandated under Chapter VII. We call on Libya to comply fully with its Charter obligations by giving a clear, unequivocal and unconditional response to Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992), 883 (1993) and 1192 (1998).

The United States and the whole Security Council demonstrated a unanimous and genuine desire to resolve this problem. Within the parameters established by previous resolutions we launched an initiative that took into account the recommendations of the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Government of Libya itself. Instead of clear acceptance, however, Libya has responded with more conditions and sharp rhetoric.

Other countries have moved to change the very laws of their societies in order to accommodate the initiative embodied in resolution 1192 (1998). The Secretary-General has offered the assistance of his office to clarify and execute the terms for the transfer of the suspects to trial. Libya has taken no concrete steps; instead it has used valuable time to retard progress towards resolution. It has even violated the sanctions regime more times since the adoption of resolution 1192 (1998) than at any time previous.

We urge Libya to comply without further delay, and we call upon all participants in this Assembly to urge Libya to comply with resolution 1192 (1998), in an effort to conclude this matter. Such an effort would lead to suspension of sanctions. That is a result that the United States and the international community would welcome.

We note that Libya, in its statement at the 19th meeting this morning, said it would accept "a trial of the two suspects before a Scottish court ... that would sit in the Netherlands". That is precisely what is being offered. We urge Libya to move expeditiously to implement this decision.

Mr. Richmond (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom would like to exercise its right of reply in response to this morning's statement by the Libyan Permanent Representative. The initiative of the United Kingdom and the United States, announced 24 August this year — to hold a trial of the two Libyan nationals accused of the bombing of Pan Am flight 103, in a Scottish court and under Scottish law, in the Netherlands — is a genuine one. It was put forward in good faith because we wish to bring this case to a close and to secure justice for the victims and the families of the victims of this terrible crime.

The United Kingdom has recently passed the necessary legislation to give effect in domestic law to this initiative and has signed the agreement with the Dutch Government which will allow the trial to take place in the Netherlands. Any suggestion that we are, in fact, intending to hold the trial in Scotland or the United States is patently false, and we reject it absolutely. Libya itself has on many occasions, including today, said that it accepts a trial in the Netherlands under Scottish law. Our initiative will enable precisely that to take place. Nothing more and nothing less.

Libya has raised a number of detailed queries about the procedure of the trial. As Libya well knows, any queries it may have can and are being clarified through the offices of the Secretary-General, for whose assistance we are most grateful. I would only reconfirm our readiness to clarify issues where clarification is needed.

We now look to Libya to fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolution 1192 (1998) by ensuring that the two accused are transferred to the Netherlands to stand trial under Scottish law. We hope all those countries who have urged the United Kingdom and the United States to agree to a trial under Scottish law in the Netherlands will now urge Libya to act responsibly and surrender the two accused, so that justice can finally be done.

Mr. Zipper de Fabiani (France) (*interpretation from French*): It was said in the statement of the representative of Libya this morning that the tragedy of Union Transport Aerens (UTA) flight 772, in which 171 people died, had nothing to do with the subject addressed by resolution 1192 (1998). Resolution 1192 (1998), in paragraph 8, modifies the conditions for proceeding to lift the sanctions related to the Lockerbie matter. This is an approach we have been supporting. The drafting of paragraph 8 of resolution 1192 (1998), however, is relevant, inasmuch as it maintains the provision of resolution 883 (1993) on the UTA matter. The Secretary-

General and the Security Council are being kept apprised of this issue by the French authorities.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in order to respond to what has just been said by the representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and France. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm once again the following points.

First, Libya has declared its acceptance of a fair trial of the suspects before a Scottish court sitting in a third country, the Netherlands, so as to allow the lifting of the sanctions being imposed on the Libyan people. Secondly, we have requested that an agreement between the parties concerned be concluded regarding several points — points that most of the delegations who have spoken about the Lockerbie incident have declared to be just, legal and reasonable. These are: (a) agreement on the limitation, clarification and precise listing of the witnesses which Libya and all other parties may require; (b) agreement on where the sentence would be served, either in the place where the court is convened, namely the Netherlands, or in Libya, in the event that the Netherlands court condemns the suspects; (c) a guarantee that the suspects, or the condemned, are not extradited to the United States or the United Kingdom; (d) agreement regarding the rights of the suspects during the process — their legal rights and their rights in the areas of security, personal, social, health and religious matters and all other interests of the suspects throughout various stages of the trial; (e) agreement between Libya and the Netherlands to move the suspects to the Netherlands and to guarantee their security and safety during their stay and during their return to Libya; and, finally, (f) endorsement by the Security Council of all agreements and their implementation under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We are prepared to implement the Security Council resolutions provided that all the parties concerned agree on all the practical measures concerning holding a trial for the suspects and provided that all the commitments of all parties and the rights and guarantees for the suspects can be determined as clearly and as precisely as possible. This international trial should be fair, in accordance with international law, and would lead to the lifting of the unfair sanctions that have led to great suffering by the Libyan people. And thus we can turn the page and start constructive relationships with all concerned States, taking into account the interests of all.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has responded positively to all the requests made by the Security Council. It has condemned international terrorism in all its manifestations, and it has requested the holding of a special session of the General Assembly to consider the phenomenon of terrorism. This morning in our statement we specifically mentioned that issue.

I reiterate that we are prepared to cooperate, and we encourage the United Kingdom and the United States to make every effort to resolve this problem in accordance with international law and in accordance with what I mentioned earlier. The suspects will not be travelling to the Netherlands for tourism. They have authorized only their lawyers to take care of all the practical steps that should be taken before and during the trial, since Libya is responsible for its nationals and will not authorize anyone on their behalf. Any derogation of this right is meaningless. The so-called initiative in the Security Council resolution alluded to was, in our view, only a manoeuvre to bypass a problem and to return the conflict to its starting point.

Now we have no difference of opinion with the United States, or with the Security Council. The problem is with the United States and the United Kingdom, as evidenced by the fact that no one in the Security Council is impeding the solutions proposed except these two States. When they agreed to hold the trial in the Netherlands, it was on the basis of the Security Council's decision. But the Council could not for four years agree to that proposal, which had been made by many different parties such as the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement and the League of Arab States.

In conclusion, we are prepared to cooperate and to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in accordance with international law, and only international law.

The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.